JANUARY 28, 2002

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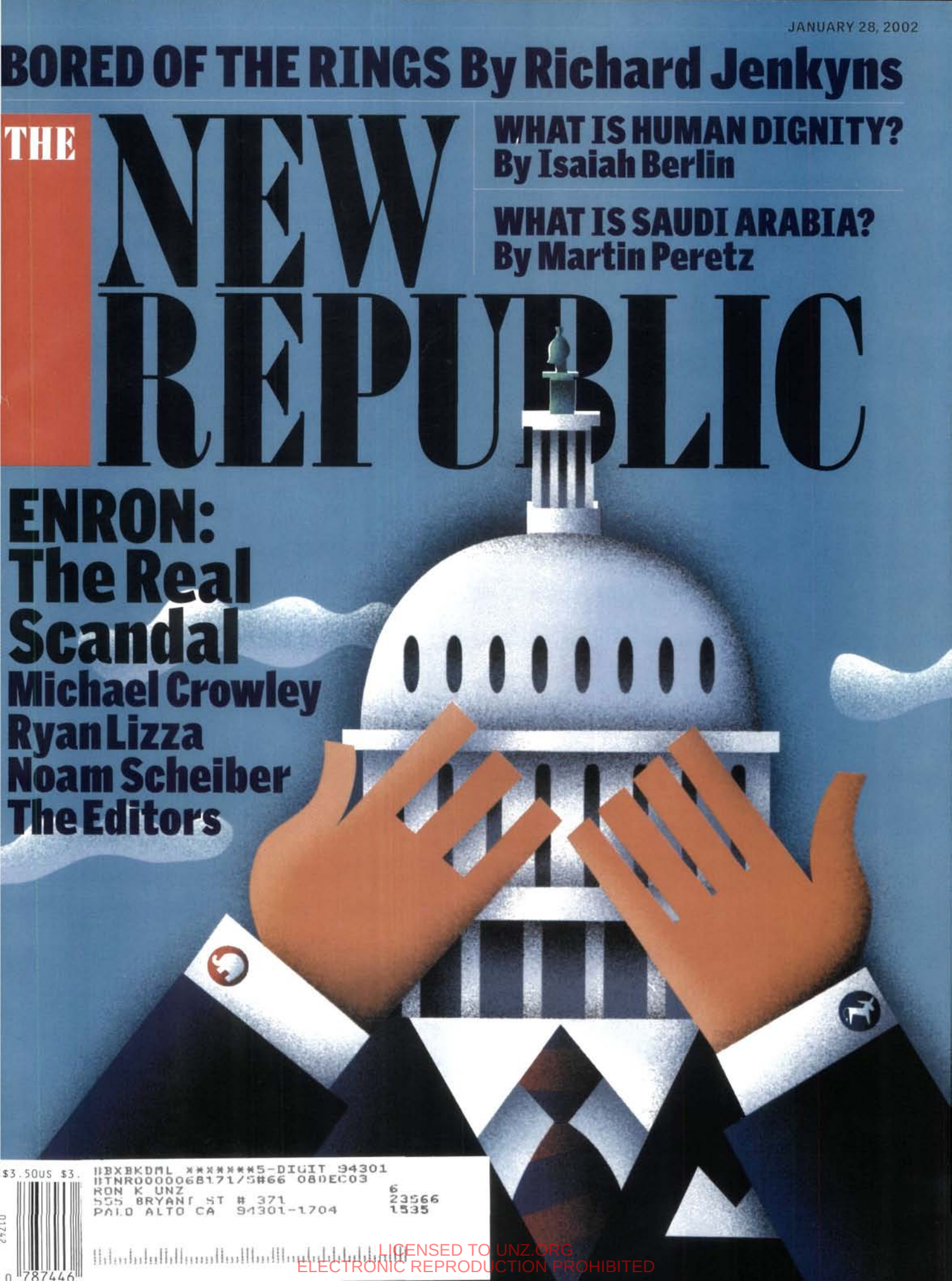

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Where We Stand

A commentary on public education and other critical issues

A Boost for Good Teaching

By SANDRA FELDMAN, President
American Federation of Teachers

As we start the new year with hope for peace and prosperity, we know that America has never been stronger, and that the importance of educating our children for democracy has never been greater.

This week, the President signed into law a significant new education bill passed by Congress. Much attention has been paid to the new requirement of testing all children in reading and math in grades 3 through 8. Less noted, however, are important new provisions that could strengthen teacher qualifications and address major impediments to improving teacher quality—including emergency credentialing and out-of-field teaching (the practice of assigning teachers to classes in subjects for which they have not been certified or prepared).

Both of these short-term fixes have turned into long-term problems—largely because of teacher shortages in hard-to-staff schools and in subjects such as math and science. They're a major reason for the growing number of under-qualified teachers being put into understaffed schools and overcrowded classrooms—mostly the classrooms of poor children, where the need for qualified teachers is greatest.

The new law requires states to end these practices, and that will be helpful. But we also need to take a hard look at how our colleges and universities are preparing future teachers. Most teachers today will tell you that they were not well prepared for the classroom when they started teaching, and that's especially true of those who entered the profession through various alternative certification programs.

Critics of current teacher education programs and certification processes—including teachers—differ about how to solve these problems. Some say we should eliminate all certification requirements and simply recruit smart people into teaching. Advocates for this approach have never spent a week in a classroom where they're responsible for the education of 25 or more youngsters every day.

Others, including the AFT, focus on the need for higher professional standards, more challenging college courses, and examinations that require teachers to have a thorough knowledge of their subjects and how to teach them.

Raising Professional Standards

Two years ago, an AFT task force composed of K-12 and higher-education leaders delivered a report on strengthening teacher preparation and induction. The report, "Building a Profession," made some bold recommendations, including one calling on universities to establish core liberal arts and science courses required for students to enter teacher education programs and another creating entrance exams for those programs—similar to what pre-med and pre-law students take before beginning their professional training.

The new year should bring a renewed focus on teacher education.

The task force advocated that all teachers, including elementary school teachers, complete an academic major in addition to their teacher education courses. It also urged that they undergo a rigorous period of "clinical" experience—interning with master teachers and highly involved education faculty. And, because state teacher tests vary in content and level of difficulty, the task force called for examinations to be based on national standards developed by recognized scholars and educators, in much the same way as the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards developed challenging advanced certification examinations.

Finally, the report called for high-quality mentoring programs, which are helpful to new teachers and enhance the profession in other ways as well.

Keeping Good Teachers

These reforms would go a long way toward having well-educated and well-prepared educators in every classroom. But alone, they aren't enough to attract them or keep them there. To do that, we'll not only have to pay all teachers much more, we'll also have to make sure that schools are structured to enable teachers to maximize learning opportunities for their students as well as themselves. That means access to materials and resources that are readily available in our best public schools. What we provide to our most privileged students must be the norm for *all* our students.

Without these supports, even the most highly qualified and dedicated teachers will be frustrated and will continue to leave the profession, just as doctors are fleeing managed care and nurses are fleeing understaffed hospitals.

We know that new challenges lie ahead for our nation. We owe it to our children and grandchildren to give them the education they'll need to preserve and strengthen our democratic institutions and build a better future for generations to come. Ensuring that all our children have high-quality teachers is crucial to achieving those goals.

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As we celebrate the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., let's also heed his words: "The richest nation on Earth has never allocated enough of its abundant resources to build sufficient schools, to compensate adequately its teachers, and to surround them with the prestige their work justifies." ▮

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Soldier on

TO THE EDITORS:
I always enjoy Gregg Easterbrook's well-researched and informative articles in THE NEW REPUBLIC. But my faith in him was shaken when I read: "Since World War II, only once has any nation other than the United States even attempted combat in a place not contiguous to its borders—Britain, in the Falklands" ("Force of Habit," December 17, 2001). During the 1970s Cuba sent thousands of combat soldiers, who fought quite effectively, to several African countries, including Angola and Ethiopia. Surely some qualifying language is in order.

RHODA RABKIN
Ithaca, New York

GREGG EASTERBROOK REPLIES:
There was an earnest fact-checking debate on this very point. But though Cuba sent soldiers across the ocean, the former Soviet Union supplied the logistics, matériel, armaments, and air support for Havana's African misadventures. There seems little chance Cuba could have staged these operations alone. The other possible postwar exception might be France, which fought in Southeast Asia and Algeria. But Indochina and Algeria were viewed as French soil when those conflicts began, which seems to place them in a different category than carrying war across faraway hostile borders, as the United States military has so often been called upon to do.

Square deal

TO THE EDITORS:
Andrew Sullivan writes that "[i]t would be hard to think of a political philosophy that is less appropriate after September 11" than the "theoconservativism" he attributes to, among others, *First Things*' Father Richard John Neuhaus ("Right Turn," December 17, 2001). As much as I admire and enjoy Sullivan's work, his effort to link Neuhaus's call for a richer civil society—for a "public square" that welcomes religious believers and arguments, and that does not require self-censorship as the price of admission to civic life—with the project of fundamentalist Islam is misplaced and unfair. There might well be such a thing as American "theoconservativism," but surely the public-square subsidiary of Neuhaus has more in common with Tocqueville than the Taliban.

RICHARD W. GARNETT
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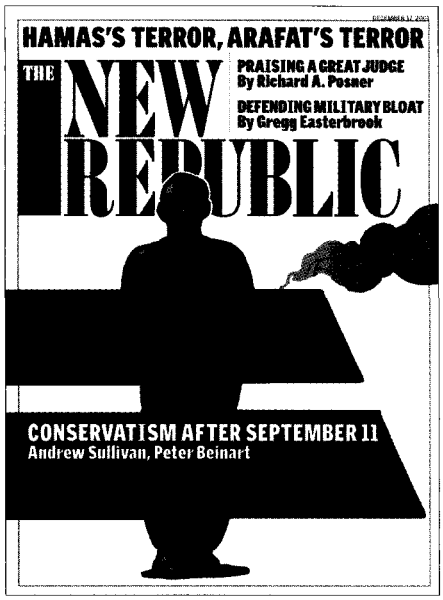

TO THE EDITORS:
Andrew Sullivan notes with praise that the "structural tax cut, enacted as the Bush administration's first priority, is the surest fire wall against a significant expansion of government in the near future." The fire wall I have on my computer network protects me against intruders with malicious intent. By his words, Sullivan judges the type of government expansion favored by liberals and even some Democrats—protection of the sick, the elderly, the poor, and the young—to be intrusive and of malicious intent. Somewhere along the road, Sullivan took a wrong turn.

HANK FAY
Naples, Florida

Tribe v. tribunal

TO THE EDITORS:
Laurence H. Tribe's analysis of the military tribunal issue solidly supports the recent stand by a phalanx of more than 300 law faculty members, signed in December ("Trial by Fury," December 10, 2001). He fully explains the probable futility of seeking correction through the judicial process, and the consequent need to convince Congress of the lurking dangers (taking account of security needs) and the means of averting or minimizing them. Further, as he observes, since the area to be explored is traditionally within Congress's dominion, and since correction can be accomplished on a broader scale through appropriate legislation than through the confines of individual cases, changing the usual constitutional forum from Article III (which applies to the judiciary) to Article I (which applies to the legislative branch) could even prove salutary—provided, of course, that legislative success does not turn elusive. Tribe's stature, including his rare, vast experience in Supreme Court litigation, should help persuade a conscientious Congress.

Tribe's arithmetic is another matter. He mentions the "old adage that it is better to free 100 guilty men than to imprison one innocent." But the allusion is to Blackstone, who set the ratio—in Volume IV of his *Commentaries*—at only ten to one. Even allowing for the ravages of inflation over the past two and a half centuries, surely the value of human life has neither appreciated nor declined tenfold in the interim.

IRVING M. HERMAN
Boca Raton, Florida

One rock falling

TO THE EDITORS:
Given the all-encompassing focus of TNR and every other major media outlet on the very real War on Terrorism, I suppose I should be grateful that a recent column of mine from *National Review Online*, about English for the Children's initiative campaign to dismantle bilingual education in Massachusetts, at least drew mention in your "Idiocy Watch" (Notebook, November 12, 2001). My column, entitled "Rocks Falling Upward," recounted a recent debate at Harvard, during which I faced an audience of hundreds of fanatic advocates of that system who packed the large auditorium to bursting. My slightly tongue-in-cheek account described me as the personal "bin Laden" of those individuals, and in turn characterized them as "educational terrorists" whose fervent devotion to that disastrous program had completely blocked change for over 30 years. Perhaps such levity was in poor taste.

Still, the unfolding evidence from California as presented in *The New York Times* and elsewhere seems to indicate that eliminating such Spanish-almost-only programs is rapidly doubling the academic performance of more than one million young immigrant students. My opponent in the Harvard debate, Professor Catherine Snow, repeatedly stressed that bilingual education was based on her absurd theory that the older you are, the easier it is to learn another language. Over recent decades millions of students throughout the United States have likely had their education and lives destroyed because of such absurd doctrine and the extraordinarily committed followers it has inspired. These are large numbers, and perhaps "educational terrorism" is not too strong a word after all.

RON UNZ
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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Free State

IN RECENT AMERICAN foreign policy, two principles loom large. In Bosnia, Kosovo, and East Timor, we have argued that national self-determination brings justice and peace. In Afghanistan, we have insisted that democracies should give no quarter in the war against terrorism. Now, if India and Pakistan can ignore both those principles, they may be able to avert a war over Kashmir.

Take self-determination first. It is a staple of high-minded commentary on Kashmir that the way to solve the conflict is to give the state's people the right to determine their own destiny. The Kashmiris, the argument goes, should be allowed to vote on whether to remain in India, join Pakistan, or become independent. After all, Kashmir's inclusion in India is a historical accident—the result of a Hindu ruler of Muslim subjects who asked India to put down a rebellion in the final days of British rule; and an Indian prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who answered the plea in part because his own family hailed from Kashmir.

The problem with this logic is that all of India is, to some degree, a historical accident. Britain's policy in the final days of empire—a policy once dubbed "divide and quit"—left all kinds of jagged edges and simmering resentments. Throughout India's Northeast, for instance, a region connected to the rest of the country by a strip of land no more than 20 miles wide in some places, roughly 40 violent secessionist movements want exactly what the Kashmiris want: independence. Why is their claim any less strong? Yes, Muslim Kashmiris feel out of place in Hindu-dominated India. But the Northeastern states of Nagaland and Mizoram are more than 80 percent Christian, and their native inhabitants have more in common culturally with the peoples of Southeast Asia than with their countrymen in New Delhi or Bombay. The Sikh militants of Punjab felt strongly enough about their national struggle that they assassinated Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1984, and Tamil extremists did the same to her son Rajiv in 1991. When India was born, none of these states got to vote on whether they wanted to be part of it either.

Self-determination proponents point to East Timor, which will gain its independence from Indonesia this year, as proof that the secession of one region need not lead an entire country to unravel. But East Timor is unique. Unlike any other region of Indonesia, it had been independent in the recent past—until Jakarta invaded it in 1975. Kashmir, by contrast, has about as good a claim to independence as do dozens of other disgruntled and abused corners of India. If well-meaning Americans advocate self-determination for Kashmir as a matter of principle, then as a matter of principle they should also advocate self-determination for a lot of other angry Indian minorities they have never heard of. Which is to say that as a matter of principle, they should advocate the dismemberment of the Indian State.

And Kashmiri independence wouldn't only dissolve India territorially; it would dissolve it ideologically as well. Indian secularism—Nehru and Gandhi's founding vision of a state that doesn't favor any religious group over another—is one of the great achievements of the twentieth century. It has made India more stable, and more tolerant, than its religiously conceived neighbor Pakistan. India has had Muslim presidents, Muslim Supreme Court justices, and Muslim captains of the national cricket team. By one estimate, more Muslims emigrate from Pakistan each year to India than the other way around. But to admit that Kashmir, as a Muslim-majority state, cannot remain within India would expose secularism as a lie and imperil the claim to equality of the more than 130 million Muslims living in the rest of the country—a Muslim population that today ranks among the freest in the world.

But if national self-determination is a treacherous principle to apply to Kashmir, so is the post-9/11 principle that the only way to deal with terrorism is war. India has shrewdly adopted the Bush administration's zero-tolerance rhetoric about terrorism, and virtually dared the United States to say there is a moral difference between our war against Al Qaeda and their war against militant Muslim groups in Kashmir. But guess what: There is. Al Qaeda and the Kashmiri militants are both bloodthirsty and fascistic, but Al Qaeda does not have a legitimate grievance against the United States—America's policy toward the Arab world, while far from perfect, is by no means immoral (see my TRB "Fault Lines," October 1, 2001). The Kashmiri extremists, by contrast, have very real grievances against India. India claims that as a fellow democracy it should be able to hit back against terrorists just as hard as the United States. But in its treatment of Kashmir, India doesn't behave like a democracy at all.

In fact, it was India's betrayal of democracy that turned Kashmir violent in the first place. Kashmir's armed uprising began in 1989, sparked in part by India's blatant rigging of an election in the state. The following year India stripped Kashmir of the limited autonomy it had enjoyed in the past. And in 2000, when Kashmir's state legislature called on New Delhi to restore that autonomy—a move that might have undermined the state's violent, all-or-nothing secessionists—the Indian government refused. Not surprisingly, the violence has intensified since then. Kashmir's rebellion has turned theocratic, and the Indian army has brutalized thousands of innocent civilians.

India certainly has the right to demand that Pakistan stop helping armed fanatics infiltrate its country. But there is more than enough hatred among native Kashmiris to fuel the state's war of attrition for decades to come. Instead of self-righteously claiming that as a democracy it has the right to respond to Kashmiri discontent with saber-rattling and repression, India must make its democracy Kashmir's solution. The Kashmiris have much more to gain by staying inside India than they do by joining its dysfunctional neighbor, Pakistan, or by becoming a tiny, economically untenable country of their own. But they won't appreciate India's freedom, or its potential prosperity, until they see it themselves. And that won't happen until India once again grants Kashmir home rule, stops the horrifying behavior of its army there, and makes a serious effort at economic development in a state that lags far behind the rest of the country.

India should feel lucky. To ultimately solve the problem of Kashmir and prevent a potential nuclear war, Pakistan will have to reinvent itself as a nation. The "K" in Pakistan, after all, stands for Kashmir—the idea that South Asian Muslims belong in Pakistan is the state's founding principle and its continuing raison d'être. In eventually admitting that Kashmiris are not entitled to leave India, Pakistan will be forced to rebuild its national identity on new foundations. That process toward a liberal, rather than sectarian, state—which Pervez Musharraf has courageously begun—is not guaranteed to succeed. And its failure is terrifying to contemplate.

By contrast, all India has to do is honor the principles upon which its nationhood rests. It must make itself worthy of Kashmir's loyalty. If it can do that, its war against terrorism will already be won.

PETER BEINART

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The Real Enron Scandal

IN WASHINGTON, THE word "investigation" is essentially synonymous with the word "scandal." So when Congress began to investigate the collapse of Enron last week, the political establishment leaped to the hyperventilated conclusion that this constituted the first major scandal of the Bush administration. But then, when little evidence surfaced that the White House had acted to prevent Enron from imploding, the Beltway leaped to the opposite conclusion: This is not a political scandal at all.

Actually, Enron's failure *is* a political scandal—but in a different way than such things are conventionally defined. Scandals are usually thought of as disclosures of illegal or unethical behavior, divorced from the normal policy-making process. Unless something dramatic comes to light, that didn't happen in this case. Rather, the scandal is that conservatives in Washington systematically rejected a series of safeguards that would have alleviated the damage from Enron's collapse, or even prevented it altogether.

The most obvious Enron victims are its employees, who had much of their retirement money vested in Enron's now-worthless stock. This, alas, was simply the most dramatic example of a common phenomenon. Many workers have huge portions of their 401(k) plans vested in their own company—employers prefer (and often require) it that way. In 1997 Senator Barbara Boxer proposed fixing this by banning investment of more than 10 percent of the total 401(k) plan in the employer's stock—the maximum that investment experts recommend a person sink into *any* company, let alone one in which you've also invested your job prospects. But the business lobby howled, and conservatives watered down the bill to the point where it offered little protection to hapless Enron staffers.

The GOP also indirectly helped Enron conceal its fraudulent business practices. Enron planted about one-third of its myriad subsidiaries in offshore havens and squirreled away its domestic assets in various tax shelters—all of which helped keep its Byzantine financial arrangements from the light of day. The degree to which companies can hide their assets is, of course, a question of public policy. Lawrence Summers, the previous Treasury secretary, sought to crack down on tax shelters but was stymied by congressional Republicans. His successor Paul O'Neill has renounced even the modest steps to discourage tax havens proposed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Enron also sustained its deception because independent auditing—epitomized in this case by Arthur Andersen—has become a toothless formality. Why? One reason is that accounting firms do all sorts of big business with the firms they audit. They have every incentive to look the other way so as not to lose their lucrative consulting fees. The previous chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, Arthur Levitt, tried to ban accounting firms from soliciting other business from their audit clients. But the accounting lobby beat back his efforts. And the lobbyist who represented the accounting firms, Harvey Pitt, was appointed last year by President Bush to serve as the chairman of the very commission he helped to defang.

But the single biggest reason Enron escaped detection is that it invested in a particular kind of derivatives—a complex financial arrangement—that, due to its newness, escaped regulatory oversight altogether. No law required Enron to disclose its derivatives' investments on its balance sheets *at all*. Some regulators found this alarming—in 1997 Brooksley Born, head of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, proposed more stringent disclosure requirements for derivatives. But financial interests, including Enron, vigorously resisted. At one point, according to *The Wall Street Journal*, House Banking Committee Chairman Jim Leach scolded Born for two hours for her pro-reform leanings.

And not only did powerful conservatives stymie the regulations that might have mitigated the Enron debacle, but many don't even grasp its failure now. Bush economic adviser Lawrence Lindsey called Enron's fall "a tribute to American capitalism." O'Neill echoed, "Part of the genius of capitalism is people get to make good decisions or bad decisions, and they get to pay the consequence or to enjoy the fruits of their decisions."

The distinctive characteristic of the Enron fiasco, of course, is precisely that the malfeasers have *not* paid any consequences. The executives who cooked up Enron's crooked schemes sold hundreds of millions of dollars worth of stock, while unsuspecting employees have borne the brunt. The broader victim is the public's trust that ordinary people won't fall prey to crooked machinations by inside operators—a trust upon which capitalism itself depends. The Bushies seem not to recognize this larger failure, either. Enron isn't considered a political scandal because it hasn't impugned Bush's character. But far more damning, it has impugned his ideology. ■

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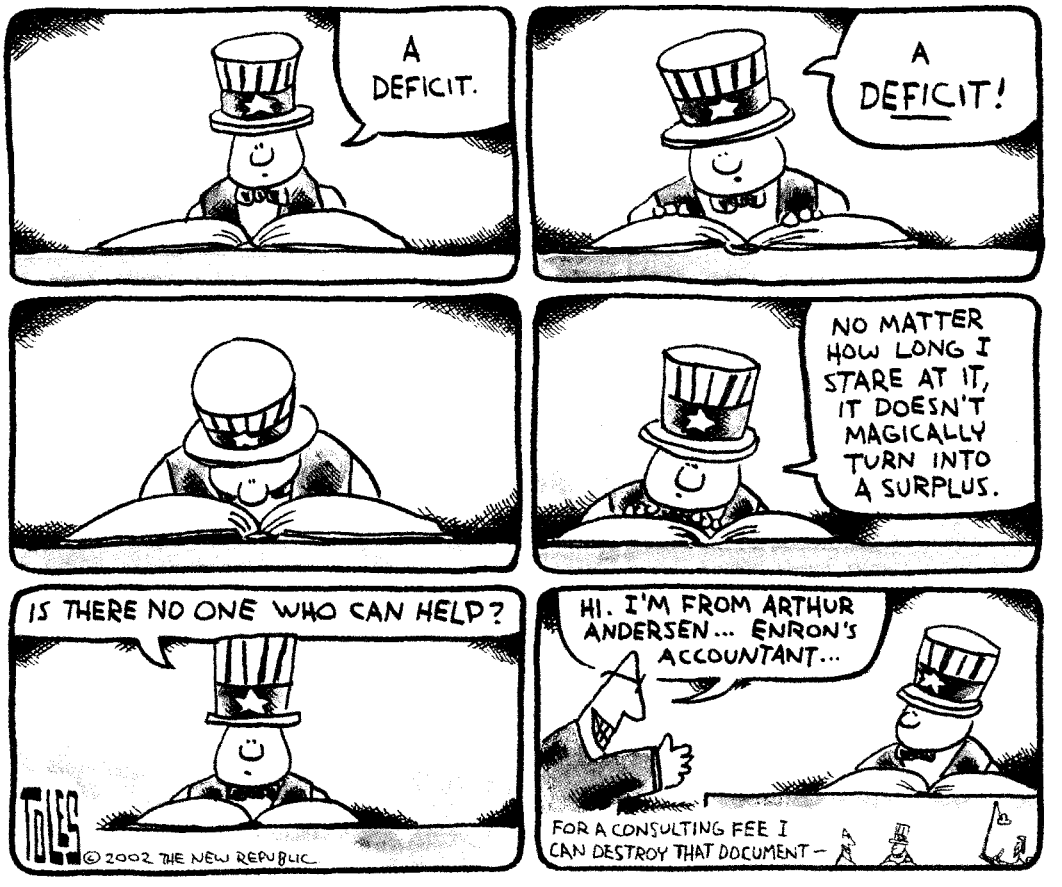
NOTEBOOK

WANTED: WHITE HOUSE SHILL WITH NO PRIOR EXPERTISE OR OPINIONS: "Our firm has been awarded the assignment by the Department of the Treasury through Secretary O'Neill and a Presidential Oversight Board, to identify possible candidates to become the Commissioner of Internal Revenue Service (IRS). From this list the Secretary will recommend to the President individuals for his nomination to the US Senate for confirmation.... The individual is preferably NOT a tax attorney and does not need to have any in depth exposure to the tax system or code. Prior government experience would be a plus either directly or indirectly. As an appoinment [sic] of the President he/she is expected to fully support the President's positions and His Administration." —e-mail from Russell Reynolds Associates of Dallas, Texas, January 9

ARI FLEISCHER OUT-OF-THE-LOOP WATCH, CONT'D: This space has commented before on the exceptional frequency with which President Bush's press secretary finds himself knowing less about what's going on in his administration than the reporters he's supposed to be briefing. But never has Fleischer's ignorance proven such a political embarrassment to the White House as in the budding Enron scandal. On January 9 he told reporters, "I'm not aware of anybody in the White House who discussed Enron's financial situation." The next morning Fleischer was forced to inform the press that in fact both Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill and Commerce Secretary Don Evans had discussed Enron's impending collapse with Ken Lay. But he maintained he'd been technically accurate in his earlier denial, as neither man works within the White House itself. The gathered reporters pressed on: Did those freelancing cabinet secretaries mention their conversations with Enron to White House officials? "There's nobody here that I'm aware of that anybody's brought to my attention," Fleischer offered dubiously. Did any White House officials talk to Enron? "Nothing that was brought to my attention or that I'm aware of," he replied. Subsequently, of course, somebody brought it to Ari's attention that he was wrong on both counts: There was a working group inside the White House monitoring the Enron collapse that coordinated closely with the department heads. And senior White House official Mitch Daniels had chatted with Lay about the stimulus bill back in October. If ignorance truly is bliss, Fleischer must be the happiest man in the administration.

AUTO SHOW: Last week George W. Bush canceled the "supercar" program set up by the Clinton administration—and it's just as well. As Gregg Easterbrook explained in these pages ("Political Mileage," October 9, 2000), the much-touted supercar effort—whose goal was a family sedan attaining 80 miles per gallon—was little more than a political sham designed to hand subsidies to automakers while giving them an excuse for short-term inaction on fuel economy. Rather than take straightforward, immediate steps to improve gas mileage—especially for SUVs—auto companies could claim to be working on wonder cars that somehow never materialized. But while Bush was right to drop the Clinton initiative, in its stead he has created something equally pointless—a government-funded, automaker-run research initiative to make "fuel-cell" power for vehicles. Such cells are a fabulous idea: They would replace the internal combustion engine with chemical power plants that use little or no fossil fuels and emit little or no greenhouse gases. Someday all American cars may be powered by fuel cells. But like the supercar program, the Bush fuel-cell effort will probably impede, rather than advance, progress toward more energy-efficient cars. First,


A DEFICIT.
A DEFICIT!
NO MATTER HOW LONG I STARE AT IT, IT DOESN'T MAGICALLY TURN INTO A SURPLUS.
IS THERE NO ONE WHO CAN HELP?
HI. I'M FROM ARTHUR ANDERSEN... ENRON'S ACCOUNTANT...
FOR A CONSULTING FEE I CAN DESTROY THAT DOCUMENT—
TOLES
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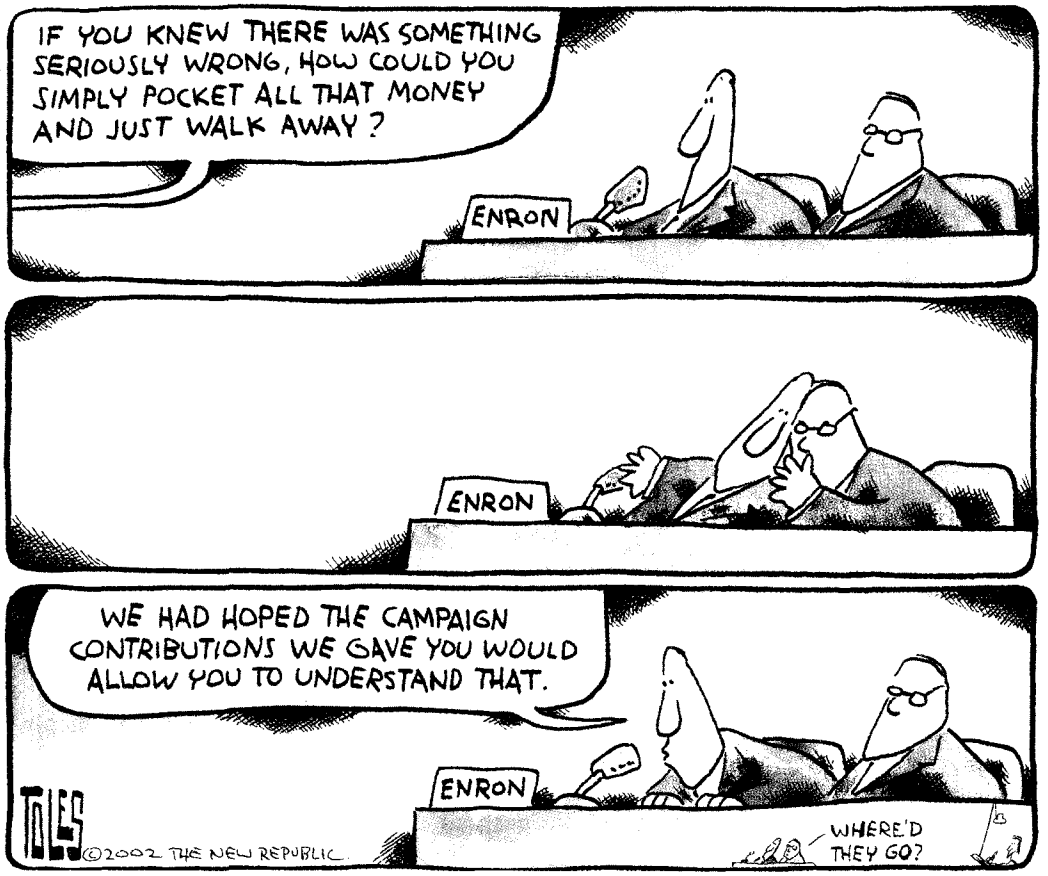
automakers *already* have a powerful incentive to research fuel cells—namely that practical, affordable fuel-cell vehicles would probably be best-sellers. (Indeed, the Big Three, plus several major foreign-auto firms, were already trying furiously to perfect an affordable fuel cell.) Then there's the pie-in-the-sky problem: Just as the supercar program focused far into the distance, the Bush program contemplates nothing in showrooms for 10 to 20 years. This provides automakers with an excuse—"We're working on the cars of the future"—for doing nothing about fuel economy now. Yet as the National Academy of Sciences concluded in a July 2001 report requested by the Bush White House, "[T]echnologies already in existence today could significantly reduce fuel consumption" of both cars and SUVs. Considering that the United States bends its foreign policy objectives to avoid offending oil sheiks, it is a scandal that federal gas-mileage standards haven't risen in three presidential terms (yes, Ronald Reagan was the last to raise them), though technological advances make possible higher-mpg vehicles that are big, safe, comfy, and fast. Instead, SUVs get special exemptions from fuel-economy standards, keeping the United States dependent on Saudi oil barons who smile as they fund anti-American and anti-Israeli terrorism. A roughly 25 percent increase in the fuel efficiency of U.S. vehicles—possible with existing technology—would allow the United States to stop importing any oil at all from the Persian Gulf. *That* would further homeland security; what Bush offers instead (like Clinton before him) is a payoff to automakers for doing nothing.

READ MY LIPS: "There are some in Washington saying that the tax cut caused the recession," asserted President Bush earlier this month. It was clear at the time that Bush was referring to Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle, who had criticized the president's tax cut that week. Bush has played the line for laughs, and indeed the notion that the tax cut could have tipped a healthy economy into recession is pretty silly. But Daschle never said any such thing, nor did anybody else who holds any position of influence. (Daschle's economic speech argued that Bush's long-term tax cut, as opposed to the short-term rebates, may have worsened the recession by pushing up interest rates.) But that hasn't stopped Bush's sycophants in the press from robotically repeating the falsehood. "[S]omebody ought to send [Daschle] a calendar," sneered George Will, "because the recession began in March. The tax cuts came later." Daschle, according to a *National Review* editorial, believes tax cuts "cause recessions even before they're enacted." *The Wall Street Journal* editorial page, of course, repeated this line, as did columns by Lawrence Kudlow, Donald Lambro, and Jack Kemp in *The Washington Times*. Someone should tell conservative pundits that just because the president doesn't seem to have read Daschle's speech doesn't mean they shouldn't either.

AND WE THOUGHT THE WAR WAS MESSAGE ENOUGH: "And now more than ever after the indelible sight of the horrors inflicted by hate on September 11, we must pass hate-crimes legislation. Let us send a strong, unequivocal message that hate-motivated violence in any form, from any source, for any reason, will not be tolerated anywhere in this country."—Senator Ted Kennedy, National Press Club, January 16


IF YOU KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING SERIOUSLY WRONG, HOW COULD YOU SIMPLY POCKET ALL THAT MONEY AND JUST WALK AWAY?
ENRON
ENRON
WE HAD HOPED THE CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS WE GAVE YOU WOULD ALLOW YOU TO UNDERSTAND THAT.
ENRON
WHERE'D THEY GO?
TOLES
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DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS: A Notebook item about Senator John Kerry's decision to form a political action committee contained a misattributed quote (January 7). The quote beginning, "Personal rationalization or political realism?" should have been attributed to *Boston Globe* columnist Eileen McNamara, not the senator. We regret the error. ■

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On Iraq, McGovernism returns.

After the Fall

By LAWRENCE F. KAPLAN

LAST MONTH A band of lawmakers led by John McCain drafted a letter to President Bush insisting that "Saddam Hussein must be removed from power." There was only one problem: With the exception of Joe Lieberman and McCain's friend Congressman Harold Ford, they couldn't find any Democrats willing to sign it. And so the letter went out with only two Democrats committed to the Iraqi dictator's ouster. Several Democratic congressional aides insist that their bosses might have signed, but complain that Lieberman—apparently wanting to be one of the few prominent Democratic signatories—hurried the letter along before they had time to contemplate its full meaning. But others, including Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle, had plenty of time to affix their signatures. And they declined to call for decisive action against Iraq for a simple reason: They don't support it.

In the immediate aftermath of September 11, pundits declaimed that the war on terrorism had finally closed the foreign policy gap between the two parties: that we were all hawks now. But the consensus applied to Afghanistan alone. Today Republicans have largely united in the belief that Saddam must go. (Even Trent Lott, a staunch Bush loyalist who rarely agrees with McCain about anything, signed the letter demanding White House action against Iraq.) And near-unanimity prevails among congressional Democrats as well: that deposing Saddam isn't worth the effort. In October, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Joseph Biden lectured a like-minded audience at the Council on Foreign Relations that an attack "would be a disastrous mistake." Tom Daschle, too, worries that an attack would be "a mistake" because it would prompt international concern "about the direction of U.S. policy." Senator Paul Wellstone claims that "there is [sic] no good short-term options for getting rid of [Saddam]." And House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt argues that, rather than declare war, the United States ought to "increase the pressure, incrementally" and "work with the world coalition."

Sound familiar? They're practically the same lines congressional Democrats uttered in opposition to the Gulf war a decade ago. To be sure, the Democratic congressional leadership may be less suspicious about the general aims of U.S. foreign policy than they were then. But that's mostly because they have less interest in foreign policy. As one Democratic aide on the House International Relations Committee puts it, "[Democratic congressmen] want to talk about taxes and the economy. They couldn't care less about Iraq." And as a result Daschle, Gephardt, & Co. have been relying heavily on those in their party who do have strong foreign policy inclinations: in particular a parade of ex-Clinton officials and congressional aides whose instincts remain frozen in pre-Gulf war amber.

POLITICALLY, THE DEMOCRATS' position makes little sense. The party leadership's opposition to the Gulf war badly damaged the political fortunes of prominent Democrats like Sam Nunn and Bill Bradley. And recent polls by *The Washington Post*, CNN, and Reuters show that three-quarters of Americans (a much higher level than supported going to war in 1990) favor a U.S. effort to depose Saddam. Still other surveys—including one by Democratic pollster Mark Penn—show that, more than ever, voters prefer Republicans to Democrats on national security issues. But absent Democratic politicians with strong opinions about, or even solid backgrounds in, foreign affairs, the liberal portion of an already liberal foreign policy establishment has been shaping the party's stance on Iraq.

Some of the worst advice comes from salons hosted by former Clinton aides. Until recently senior Gore adviser Marc Ginsberg ran one group, which in turn competed with another led by Clinton national security adviser Sandy Berger and former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. (They've since merged their accumulated wisdom.) Just as veterans of Bush père's foreign policy team like Brent Scowcroft and Colin Powell seem to view a deposed Saddam as a threat to their legacy of inaction, so do the Clintonites. Berger, who spent eight years in the Clinton White House quashing efforts to depose Saddam, has been counseling Daschle and Gephardt on Iraq, and says that because "we would be alone," an attack against Saddam would be ill-advised. Gore national security adviser Leon Fuerth, who has also been advising the Democratic leadership, claims that an attack may come "at the expense of our national security" and could prove a "fatal diversion." And Albright says that "it's hard to see that [deposing Saddam] is feasible." For his part, Ginsberg calls proponents of the Iraqi opposition "yahoos . . . [who] haven't really done their homework," and former Clinton State Department official Henri Barkey doubts that a credible Iraqi opposition "exists anywhere other than in the minds of a few hawks in Washington." (If so, one reason surely was the Clinton administration's decision to abandon opposition fighters to their fate—summary execution—in the face of an Iraqi government offensive in 1996.)

Aides to Daschle, Patrick Leahy, Christopher Dodd, and Wellstone, as well as Democratic staffers on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, echo the Clintonites. (By contrast, staffers on the House International Relations Committee, and its ranking Democrat, Congressman Tom Lantos, have been outspoken on the need for robust action against Iraq, as have Senators Charles Schumer and Evan Bayh.) "To your average [Democratic] staffer," says one not-so-average staffer, "the whole idea of going after Iraq and supporting the [Iraqi National Congress] is a Republican fetish, which people like [Richard] Perle clubbed them with for years." Indeed, the squeamishness of Democratic aides on Iraq derives as much from partisan resentment as from philosophical disagreement. It's an updated version of anti-anti-communism,

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Special Education Charters

erbert J. Walberg is a listinguished visiting low, Hoover Institution; ember Hoover's Koret Task Force on K–12 ucation; and University Scholar, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Special programs for disabled students partly account for the poor achievement and the high and rising costs of American schools. Of course, programs for blind, deaf, and other children with scientifically evidenced disabilities are clearly justified. But most of the roughly 6.1 million U.S. children in special programs are in such psychological categories as "learning disabled" and "mildly mentally retarded." In the last twenty-five years, they have accounted for the approximately 65 percent increase in special education enrollments and huge increases in costs without better learning.

Money, conflicts of interests, and disingenuous accountability often motivate the growth of such programs. The more children whom educators classify as psychologically disabled, the more money comes into their states, districts, and schools. School, district, state, and federal administrative jobs multiply accordingly, and the ensuing expanding bureaucracy distracts educators from learning; Michigan, for example, has some six thousand detailed program regulations. When children are psychologically classified, they can be neglected since they are excused from accountability examinations, thus making their schools appear to be doing better than they actually are. Kentucky, Louisiana, and South Carolina made leaps in reading scores alongside big increases in excused special students.

In 1982, the National Academy of Sciences contended that psychological classifications are unreliable and that special programs often do little good and sometimes do harm. Subsequent research has shown that the **present classification systems misleadingly suggest that as many as 80 percent of all school students require special programs, which cost about 2.3 times more than regular programs.**

Yet studies show that mildly disabled students do no better in regular classrooms because what they need is better—not special or differentiated—teaching. Moreover, spurious diagnoses stigmatize children, give them a debilitating excuse not to learn, and lead to their segregation from other children.

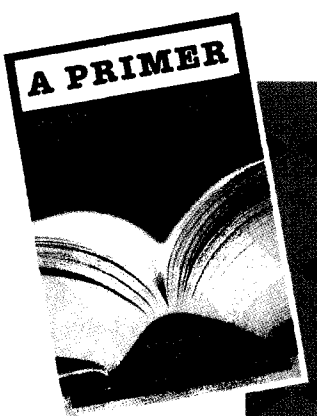
Special programs also lead to discrimination and unfairness. Special educators more often litigiously classify big-city children as mildly retarded and expect less of them. But middle-class students are less demeaningly labeled (for example, "special learning disabled"). In affluent Greenwich, Connecticut, educators classify about one in three high school students as disabled. Such students may be get tutors, note takers, laptop computers, and extra time on tests, including those for college admission.

The rapidly growing numbers of charter schools suggest a solution: Charter schools are privately governed and largely deregulated, but they receive public funds. They must admit all applicants (or use lotteries when oversubscribed). To begin, they must attract students; to continue, they must retain them and report achievement gains.

Analogous special education charters would work in a similar way. Any charter school or regular school could apply for a waiver of special federal and state regulations. Waivered schools would continue to receive extra money for special children but be held responsible for their retention and learning. They could, for example, declassify special children, remove them from segregated programs, and provide all children with more learning time and effective teaching, which are proven policies for promoting achievement for regular and special students. The resulting deregulation, competition for special student applicants, and increased accountability to parents, citizens, and legislators would help even more.

— Herbert J. Walberg

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University



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only without the communism; if Republican Neanderthals want to depose Saddam, it must be a bad idea.

But there's also an ideological component to the Democratic foreign policy establishment's stance, which owes to the lingering suspicion that American self-interest and the interests of humanity are inherently incompatible. "The crucial difference between [the Democratic establishment's] support for the interventions in Kosovo and Bosnia," explains the Democratic Leadership Council's Will Marshall, "was that they were cloaked in disinterestedness, whereas in Iraq, America's interests are directly threatened." For such Democrats, action in concert with, and on behalf of, the international community—or even strictly in self-defense, as in Afghanistan—passes the virtue test. But action against Iraq fits none of these criteria. And with the exception of Lieberman, long gone are Scoop Jackson Democrats like Stephen Solarz, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and their staffs, who unambiguously rejected the sentiment that American power was somehow tainted.

The irony is that what passes for proof of heightened moral awareness among congressional Democrats actually amounts to moral evasion. After all, there's nothing reactionary about wanting to rid the world of a dictator who gasses his own people, invades his neighbors, harbors weapons of mass destruction, and flouts an entire catalogue of UN resolutions. As for the practical argument that an assault on Iraq would "shatter the coalition," it's a line rehashed by opponents nearly every time the United States goes to war, whether in Afghanistan last year or Iraq a decade ago. But the extent of multilateral cooperation required to launch a strike against Iraq today would be permission to use bases in Turkey and Kuwait—permission administration officials express confidence they would receive. The United States might not enjoy the moral support of "allies" like Egypt and Saudi Arabia, such as it is. But does the Democratic leadership really believe that the unilateral exercise of American power threatens the world more than the persistence of Saddam Hussein? If so, Democrats might have some explaining to do when, as seems increasingly likely, the Bush team liberates Iraq. Because preserving George McGovern's legacy—much less Bill Clinton's—hardly justifies preserving an Iraqi tyrant. ■

Remembering Saudi Arabia.

Veiled Threat

By Martin Peretz

Memory often works its way into metaphor, and that has surely happened with my 1991 trip to Saudi Arabia. But I doubt that my recollections are out of date—this is, after all, a society that prides itself on stasis. Yes, oil prices have fallen in recent years, which means that the Saudi welfare state—a dowry for every 18-year-old; long-term, non-interest-bearing loans for new homes; free (if mediocre) medical care—is no longer quite so lavish. Ideologically, however, Saudi Arabia's economic slide has, if anything, made its royal family more insular and more reactionary, further tightening the noose of permissible ideas. Which is to say that if my experiences no longer precisely track Saudi reality, it is because they are too benign.

Saudi Arabia's princes (all 7,000 or so of them—there are more princes in Saudi Arabia than cab drivers) move lavishly (and often lasciviously) through the pleasure capitals of the world. But the kingdom itself doesn't welcome tourists: You must be invited by someone very important to get the equivalent of a visa. Full-time journalists are discouraged out of fear that they might discover too much. And while its great wealth, mesmerizing backwardness, and reflexive reliance on up-to-date gadgetry makes Saudi Arabia an intriguing case study for social scientists, the monarchy doesn't normally let them in either. You've got a better chance of doing independent research in Beijing than in Riyadh. Every so often the royals do let a travel writer visit, but only because they assume that, incapable of doing any real reporting, he will produce a contemporary orientalist desert romance—rather like the ones styled, in the grand manner many decades ago, by Richard Burton, William Palgrave, Gertrude Bell, St. John Philby, and Wilfred Thesiger.

In fact, the literature on Saudi society is so poor that when I asked a very learned friend what I should read before I went, he didn't suggest a book about Saudi Arabia at all. He suggested I read about ancient Rome—not the Roman republic, but the Roman empire, because that was another dominion in which just about all the labor was done by foreigners (in fact, by slaves). I read Moses Finley's *The Ancient Economy*, which was even then a little dated, but prepared me for one of the most stunning facts of Saudi life: the alienation of Saudis (or, more precisely, the absence of Saudis) from the ordinary work of their society.

There is one exception to this rule: the Saudi Shia, who constitute between 7 percent and 15 percent of the population. (They cluster in the Eastern Province, adjacent to Iraq, which helps explain why Riyadh is so desperate that Saddam's dominion remain intact. If Shia separatism breaks loose in the region, it will threaten the Saudis as well.) But besides them, the country's industry (such as it is) and virtually its entire service economy, depends on the diligence of Pakistanis, Indonesians, Sudanese, Yemenis, and Egyptians. Saudi Arabia, like many other Arab countries threatened by denominational or ethnic divisions (Lebanon and Algeria, for instance) are reluctant to conduct a reliable census. But everyone knows that there are more guest workers in the country than native Saudi adults. And that doesn't even count the most controversial guest workers of all—the ones whose presence prompted Osama bin Laden to blow up the World Trade Center—the soldiers of the United States.

Since September 11 the United States has been forced to confront two critical, but long-ignored, questions about our Saudi "partners." The first is concrete: Is the Saudi regime on our side in the war against terrorism, or bin Laden's? The Bush administration, generally (and laudably) honest in its definition of terrorism, cuts intellectual corners here, perhaps in deference to Poppy, who has deep ties to the Saudi

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super-rich and whose relations with them have amplified the Bush family fortune. When asked about Saudi Arabia's assistance in the war against terrorism, administration officials usually respond: "They've done whatever we've asked," which sounds positive, but is actually so vague and insubstantial as to suggest the opposite.

And the available evidence furthers that suspicion. The Saudis have never truly cooperated with the FBI's investigation of the 1996 bombing of the U.S. military barracks in Dhahran, in which 19 were murdered, and several hundred were wounded and maimed. Saudi intelligence steered entirely clear of our inquiry into the 2000 attack on the USS *Cole* in neighboring Yemen. Most importantly, Saudi authorities went into virtual seclusion after a terrorist network honeycombed by Saudis (including pampered children of the Saudi elite) blew up American Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998. And, all the while, the Saudi government has shielded the accounts of the individuals, charities, banks, and businesses that pay for the terror international.

Has September 11 changed all this? Here's one indication: Saudi Arabian Airlines—along with Kuwait Airways, Pakistan International Airlines, Royal Jordanian Airlines, Egypt Air, and a handful of other major carriers—has, since 1988, refused to participate in the Advance Passenger Information System, a joint effort of U.S. Customs and the Immigration and Naturalization Service, which checks incoming passengers against more than 20 federal databases. (Kuwait Airways and Egypt Air finally backed down in late October.) Participating airlines (there are roughly 100 of them) send a passenger manifest when a plane departs for the United States. One wouldn't think that too onerous a burden, but even after the World Trade Center fell, a Saudi embassy spokesman said that his country "was not in any hurry to sign up," as a *New York Times* correspondent characterized it. Which is a pity, since had Saudi Arabian Airlines participated in the program, one or two of the 15 Saudis who perpetrated the September 11 atrocity might not have made it into the United States. No wonder senior members of Congress are beginning to publicly question what the United States is getting in return for the thousands of American troops on Saudi soil.

BUT THERE IS a second, broader question: Are the Saudis our allies against fanatical Islam in a more quotidian way? That is, in the simple transactions of human life. Do they value the tolerance and moderation that the United States hopes will take root in the Muslim world? It has long been an American habit to call the Saudi regime "moderate." But even a decade ago, my experience in Saudi Arabia deeply belied that comforting cliché.

When I applied for a visa, my Saudi hosts suggested that on the line marked "religion," I answer "Christian." I explained that my ancestors died rather than abjure their faith. "What about leaving the line blank?" Again I said, "No." Then I was asked to procure a new passport, one without those irritating Israeli entry stamps. (Again I said, "No.") The irony is that I was invited in large part because the kingdom wanted certain American Jews (American Zionists, in fact) to visit. They had an anti-Semite's—that is to say, a wildly exaggerated—estimation of the power Jews wield in the United States. And they wanted to speak to that supposed power.

If I had marked "Christian," I would have joined a more numerous, but scarcely better treated, class. There are American and European Christians in Saudi Arabia. Most of them live in Dhahran, headquarters of ARAMCO, the Arabian-American Oil Company, a tiny outpost of a city in which women can drive and where you can drink a "cousin of vodka" brewed in the residents' bathtub stills. Dhahran is the only place in the country where women can be seen not wearing the *abaya*, the head-to-toe covering that is a marginally less restrictive version of the burqa. It is essentially an extraterritorial city, akin to those parts of Shanghai turned over by China to France, Great Britain, and the United States in the territorial concessions of the mid-1800s. Dhahran looks like an Orange County suburb, and its inhabitants try to live that way. They have no interest in becoming Saudi citizens, which is a good thing, since as Christians they are not eligible.

The few other Westerners reside in international enclaves in Jeddah and Riyadh, and I sat next to one American woman on a flight from the former to the latter. She had lived in Saudi Arabia for nearly a quarter-century, teaching in a foreign school in a foreign compound. Her husband taught "flight English" to Saudi pilots. "Oh, you must be Christians," I observed. "Yes," she responded, "Christians in the catacombs." That November she had visited her sister in Frankfurt and, at the airport there, had purchased a small, plastic Christmas tree. When she arrived back in Saudi Arabia, customs confiscated the tree as an alien religious artifact, along with a Christmas-music tape. (Nonalien religious expressions are, needless to say, not only tolerated; they are mandated. Saudi Arabian Airlines begins its flights with a reading from the Koran—a practice I am loath to mention for fear that the ultraorthodox will suggest it for El Al.)

Tears welled up in her eyes: "I am a religious woman, a believer. There is no priest here. I cannot go to confession." And then her face lit up. "My daughters have been confirmed. Not by a practicing priest. He's actually a defrocked priest. Maybe this is a sin. But God will understand. He's someone in the Italian Embassy, someone high up. Every so often he gives all his household staff a day off, and he celebrates Mass. Always on Good Friday. And then, a few months ago, he confirmed my daughters. There is a big, surreptitious Catholic community in Riyadh, and it meets its religious obligations as best it can, like in the catacombs." And, then, she added, "Jews don't have this problem. There are no Jews here."

THE SAUDIS TAKE the Taliban's side on women as well. About half an hour before our flight from JFK landed in Jeddah, a procession of women headed into the bathroom. They went in dressed in jeans or miniskirts, tight blouses, see-throughs, all rather chic. They emerged shrouded, not half an inch of their wrists or ankles showing.

Except in Dhahran, that was the last we saw of adult women. Walking with a senior prince in Jeddah, for instance, a port city and therefore somewhat more cosmopolitan than Riyadh, I noticed dark, covered figures moving formlessly on the other

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side of the street. The prince asked me if I knew what they were. "UBOs," he explained, "Unidentified Black Objects."

Some of our hosts took pictures of their children, boys and girls, with Michael Kinsley, then seen in privileged Saudi houses on CNN's "Crossfire." But if you asked one of those hosts about his children, he would tell you about his sons. Once, an extremely intelligent Saudi man I'd known a bit at Harvard did actually discuss his daughters. When I commented on this, however, he said, "But I am a father only of daughters. You know. This is a special character in Arab vernacular, *abu banat*, father of daughters. If you have only girls, you are thought to be sexually deficient."

Girls do study in Saudi Arabia; some young women even "attend" university. I write "attend" because they are not actually permitted on campus. We visited Riyadh's King Saud University, a new, huge, and luxuriant campus. Kinsley asked about the cost, and the provost—if I remember correctly—said $3.8 billion. The university was a techie's dream—but much of the technology was in service of gender segregation. Professors lectured to rooms of men, and women watched via closed-circuit television from all-female classrooms far away. When a woman wanted to pose a question, she pushed a button on her desk, which sparked a light on the professor's lectern.

The library, though, was not yet computerized. There were old-fashioned card files, row after row of drawers. Fouad Ajami, in what I thought of as a rare act of self-advertisement, looked up his own name. He had by then written three books: *The Arab Predicament*, *The Vanished Imam*, and *Beirut: City of Regrets*. Not one was in the library. (On the other hand, he puckishly looked up "Peretz" and found a collection of stories by the great Yiddish writer and ancestor of mine, I.L. Peretz. But, then, Yiddish literature doesn't threaten the Saudi state; Fouad's books might.) The absence of those books became the subject of our ensuing lunch and an embarrassment to our increasingly defensive hosts. "This is not political censorship," said one prince. "This is about religious sensibility," said a history professor—alluding to the fact that Ajami was born a Shia and has written eloquently about Shiism—as if that were explanation enough.

I THINK IT was that night that we were taken to the desert ranch of another prince—the governor of a province, if I remember rightly. Before dinner we stood around a TV set hooked up to something in the desert, and watched the Clarence Thomas hearings. I didn't think that anything truly terrible had been proven against Thomas, so I was not against his confirmation. But our hosts took a different view. They simply *assumed* that the allegations were true. As one prince asked his cousin: "What kind of man doesn't do something like this to a woman every day?" The cousin's answer: "Only a man without a dick."

Our meal was set out on oriental rugs, deeply textured and intricately colored, over the sand floor. The food was heavy and heavily tasty: lamb, mutton, beans, herbs aromatically rich, desserts a bit too thickly honeyed. In its opulence and authenticity, the meal was meant to dazzle—and under a million stars, it did. Until my friend Tom Tisch noticed in the distance a white truck that said, "CATERING BY MARRIOTT."

Even this was fake, even this the Saudis had bought rather than produced. The Saudi party, I suspect, will soon be over. Since September 11 we have begun learning how the Saudi elite funded a fanatical Wahhabi clerisy that spread its poison throughout the Muslim world. But sooner or later, the zealots will turn their attention back home, to the corrupt, pathetic monarchs they so revile. Abroad, the layers of Saudi deception are slowly unraveling—to America's and the world's horror. Lord help us when they are ripped away from within. ■

Foggy Bottom v. the victims of 9/11.

Freezer Burn

By ASHER PRICE

IF AND WHEN the United States nabs Osama bin Laden, James Beasley hopes to make his prompt acquaintance. The lawyer—of the Philadelphia firm Beasley, Casey & Erbstein—has filed two civil suits that name bin Laden and his cronies as defendants, and is eager to serve them notice that he is suing them for all they are worth. Already Beasley's lawyers have served the Taliban: Protected by armed security, they arrived at the Islamabad household of Abdul Salaam Zaeef, the Taliban's former ambassador to Pakistan. When he wouldn't leave his veranda, they tacked the court papers to his door. Now comes bin Laden. So far the septuagenarian Beasley has prepared Pashto, Dari, and Urdu advertisements that will run in Pakistani and Afghan newspapers and television to inform bin Laden and his co-defendants that they have been sued in American court and that they have six weeks to respond—and offering the law firm's address for reply.

Beasley isn't worried about losing; he'll probably win by default. And he knows bin Laden and his collaborators have the ability to pay—the United States has frozen roughly $250 million worth of their assets. The problem is getting the money. And there, the obstacle in Beasley's way isn't Al Qaeda; it's the U.S. State Department. This week State announced it was turning over $221 million of that $250 million in frozen Afghan assets to the new Afghan government. And while the United States should, of course, pay generously to rehabilitate that shattered country, it's not an accident that Foggy Bottom chose to do it with money that could have gone to victims of September 11. In fact, for many years now, despite the clear wishes of Congress, key State Department officials have stymied American families seeking to collect money from the terrorists who killed their loved ones. And 9/11 hasn't changed their minds one bit.

The tussle between the families of terrorism victims and the State Department began not with Afghanistan, but with Cuba. In February 1996, Cuban MiGs shot down two small civilian planes belonging to Brothers to the Rescue, a Cuban-American group dedicated to spiriting Cuban refugees to the

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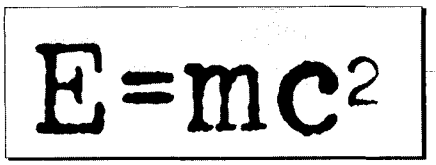

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RICHARD WOLFSON (Ph.D., Dartmouth College) is Professor of Physics at Middlebury College in Vermont, where he has also held the George Adams Ellis Chair in the Liberal Arts. Decades of teaching at Middlebury, with its strong emphasis on the humanities, has made him an expert at demonstrating the logic and significance of physics to students from many fields. His wide-ranging research interests include plasma physics, medical physics, solar-energy engineering, global climate change, and theoretical astrophysics. His writings have appeared in *Scientific American*, and he is the author of the textbook *Physics for Scientists and Engineers*, now in its 3d edition.

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United States. "I am asking that Congress pass legislation," President Clinton said on television two days after the attacks, "that will provide immediate compensation to the families, something to which they are entitled under international law, out of Cuba's blocked assets here in the United States." Two months later, in late April, Congress passed the Anti-Terrorism Act, which permits civil suits against countries on the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism. But Congress didn't include an enforcement method: It simply assumed that the terrorism-sponsoring state's assets would be liquidated to pay off claims. In later testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Professor Allan Gerson—a lawyer for victims of Pan Am 103 and an architect of the 1996 act—explained, "We could not imagine, and indeed still have trouble imagining, that the U.S. government... would seek to forestall or prevent the honoring of a validly entered judgment against the frozen assets of the defendant state."

But in December 1997, after a Miami judge awarded the families of three of the Brothers to the Rescue pilots $187.6 million without specifying where that money should come from, Gerson and his allies got a rude awakening. When the families tried to collect the money from Cuba's frozen assets in the United States, the State Department, citing national security concerns, blocked them. The families did not collect.

That case set the pattern for a fight that continues to this day. After the Cuba ruling, other lawsuits came out of the woodwork: Terry Anderson and other former hostages seized by Hezbollah sued Iran, which funds the terrorist group, for damages; two families sued Iran for sponsoring a Hamas bus bombing in Jerusalem. All won in court, but each time the State Department stopped them from collecting from the cache of frozen assets by filing court motions citing national security concerns.

In 1998 Congress responded by passing another law that required that suits be paid with frozen assets. But State successfully attached to the legislation presidential authority to waive payments—on a case-by-case basis—in the interest of national security; in the next year President Clinton used that waiver to quash each of the five outstanding cases against the frozen assets of foreign governments. In October 2000 Congress tried again, approving the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act, intended to ensure prompt payment of awarded claims against countries that sponsor terrorism. Again the State Department succeeded in adding language that guaranteed the payoffs only to certain well-known cases—among them, Anderson's and Brothers to the Rescue's. In at least five other cases, victims still received nothing.

FOGGY BOTTOM MAKES various arguments to justify this stonewalling, but not good ones. State maintains that the liquidation of frozen assets—selling off consular properties, for instance—could violate international treaties. But those international treaties are only binding within a larger international law framework called "comity" (a code of etiquette that governs the interactions of courts in foreign countries). And plaintiff lawyers rightly argue that once a state sponsors terrorism, it falls outside that code. They cite as precedent the Nuremberg trials, in which the Allies tried German war criminals because they no longer recognized Germany's right to try its own citizens.

A second State Department argument is that seizing frozen assets may endanger American properties or citizens abroad, since governments or terrorists might retaliate with violence. But given that it was a willingness to target civilians that landed terrorist states and organizations in court in the first place, deterrent arguments don't really hold water. What's more, Foggy Bottom's fear of retaliation hasn't kept it from poaching seized foreign assets itself. For instance, in the mid-1980s the State Department's own Office of Foreign Missions occupied the former Iranian Embassy—rent-free—without reprisals from Tehran.

State also calls frozen assets valuable diplomatic bargaining chips. In a June 2000 testimony before the House Judiciary Committee on the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act, State Department Under Secretary for Policy Thomas Pickering argued that by holding out frozen assets as a reward for good behavior, the United States convinced Vietnam to help account for American POWs and MIAs, and fostered normalization with Romania, Bulgaria, and Cambodia. But that is really just another way of saying that the United States can win more concessions from antagonistic countries with carrots than with sticks. And when it comes to countries like Iran, it's by no means certain that is the case. In fact, Congress has made it clear that it believes American interests are best served by a hard line against regimes like the one in Tehran—that's one of the reasons it has tried to help terrorism victims collect.

BUT STATE'S REAL motivation may have less to do with these high-minded arguments than with something more primal: turf. After all, the recent anti-terror legislation puts courts in the position of directing foreign policy. And that's a position State would rather occupy itself. On the very day in 1998 that a $247.5 million judgment against Iran was handed down in the case of Alisa Flatow, a 20-year-old American killed in Gaza by an Islamic Jihad suicide bomber, a State Department spokesman announced: "[C]ourt opinions, in our view, are not going to change our policy; and our policy is that these are major problems between our countries, but they are problems that we believe can be overcome through direct dialogue." That's why, for instance, in 1993 the State Department backed the Iraqi Claims Act, which would have used Iraqi frozen assets to settle claims against Saddam Hussein by individuals and companies affected by the 1990 invasion of Kuwait—but only if State retained control over who got what.

The bureaucratic resistance, say people familiar with the issue, is concentrated among careerists in the State Department's office of the Legal Adviser. "The holdup is at the mid-level bureaucracy," says Daniel Wolf, who worked at the Legal Adviser's office during the Reagan years and now represents Americans held in Iraq during the Gulf war. "A lot of the opposition is located at the Legal Adviser's office.... They view these assets as within their basic turf and authority, and

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to be doled out or used in leverage or in a manner they see fit." And, he says, they mainly see fit to play nice: "They see their role as reducing irritation between states. If their desk deals with a particular country, you will hear them refer to that country as a client."

Osama bin Laden, of course, is not a country—but Foggy Bottom doesn't seem any more interested in giving his seized assets to the families of terror victims than it has been with Cuba or Iran. "I think it's going to be really hard for the plaintiffs," says Stuart Eizenstat, former deputy secretary of the Treasury, about efforts to claim bin Laden's frozen assets. "I think the government will fight them."

In fact, the State Department this week announced it would send $221 million in frozen assets back to Afghanistan, leaving only $34 million for the families of victims of 9/11—a move that Pamela Falk, an expert on terrorism and international law at City University of New York, calls "an end run." The State Department has also opposed the efforts of Utah Republican Representative Chris Cannon, who drafted an amendment to last October's anti-terrorism legislation that would have made blocked assets automatically available to any plaintiff who obtains judgment against a terrorist state or cell. A week after word of Cannon's amendment spread to Foggy Bottom, he received a letter from Paul Kelly, the State Department's assistant secretary for legislative affairs. Kelly said Cannon's bill would escalate an "unfair and unseemly approach to compensation" and "impair our ability to use blocked assets as diplomatic leverage." "Nor," Kelly argued, "are terrorists likely to be deterred by financial sanctions."

The administration ought to get its line straight. On October 18 in New York, U.S. District Court Judge Leonard Sand doled out maximum sentences to four Al Qaeda agents for masterminding the 1998 bombings of American Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. He indicated in a pre-sentence hearing that terrorists should pay $7 million to victims—out of blocked assets. "Today's sentences send a message," said Attorney General John Ashcroft in support of the ruling. "The United States will hunt terrorists down and will make them pay the price for their evil acts of terrorism." Presumably he didn't mean "pay the price" to be taken literally. ■

White House Watch

Keep Away

By Ryan Lizza

Earlier this month President Bush silenced Democratic attacks on his handling of the economy with a single speech accusing Tom Daschle of plotting to raise taxes. Not bad. And since the Enron scandal exploded one week ago, the White House seems to have contained it with similar alacrity. In fact, during his two-day swing through the Midwest this week, Bush hardly looked like a guy mired in scandal. Still brimming with post-9/11 confidence, he gave cogent speeches in Missouri and Louisiana previewing his election-year themes and artfully linking the war on terrorism to his top legislative priorities: a stimulus bill, fast-track trade authority, and his energy plan. By the end of the trip the White House seemed to be beating back the Enron story. Bush was misunderestimated again.

How is the White House doing it? Think of the scandal as a series of concentric circles with the president in the middle, and rings of White House staffers, cabinet secretaries, and then the Democrats around him. The goal is to push Enron and its executives as far from Bush as possible. And the White House spin machine has been succeeding, in large part because Enron is radioactive: Everyone it touches is tainted—even if there are no serious allegations of wrongdoing. Innuendo alone does the trick.

To start with, Bush and his aides tarred prominent Democrats with their own—apparently innocent—Enron connections. So what if Bush's nickname for Enron Chairman CEO Ken Lay is "Kenny Boy"? Aides reminded reporters that Lay once played a round of golf with Bill Clinton. Bush's economic adviser Larry Lindsey appeared on CNN to explain that Enron "just finished another check to the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee," declining to add that the DSCC isn't keeping the money and that Enron's donations go three to one to Republicans. They revealed that former Clinton Treasury Secretary Bob Rubin went fishing for some relief for Enron in a conversation with a Bush Treasury official—never mind that Rubin is out of office and was acting in the interest of his own company, a major Enron creditor. (The Rubin angle is a White House favorite. According to other White House reporters, Bush aides aggressively pushed this line, especially to the TV networks.) The president lent a hand too. In the sanctity of the Oval Office he told reporters that Lay "was a supporter of Ann Richards," his 1994 Democratic gubernatorial opponent. That is technically true but wildly misleading: In that race, Lay gave Bush three times as much money as he did Richards.

The next circle to absorb the Enron toxin was the Bush cabinet. To the extent Enron had contact with the administration, the Bushies suggested it was with the departments, not the White House itself. The first admission was that two cabinet secretaries, Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill and Commerce Secretary Don Evans, had discussed Enron's collapse with Ken Lay. (Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham, Fed Chairman Alan Greenspan, and Treasury Undersecretary Peter Fisher were later added to the list.) Ari Fleischer, Bush's spokesman, strained to point out that these men don't work in the White House itself. Since November, when reporters started asking about Enron, White House officials have even gone to great lengths to emphasize that cabinet departments, not the White House, were the ones monitoring the company's demise. Evans and O'Neill boasted about the fact that they kept the president out of the loop on their contacts with Lay. And when the scandal escalated last week, the White House reinforced this impression by announcing the creation of a cabinet-secretary working group to investigate the policy implications of Enron's bankruptcy. O'Neill gave a speech about Enron to a trade group this week, while

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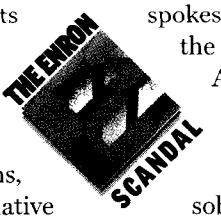
the president stumped for his agenda. And the White House is referring many questions to the Justice Department, which is conducting a criminal investigation. The message: The administration is tackling the problem but Bush himself is taking care of the people's business.

WHEN THE STORY gets closer to Bush, the details get murkier. It was only three days after the initial admission by Evans that Lay had called him when the press learned that Evans had given a heads-up about that conversation to Chief of Staff Andy Card, who spends more time with Bush than just about anyone. And when aides revealed that senior *White House* aide Mitch Daniels had chatted with Lay about the stimulus bill back in October (the bill would have awarded Enron $254 million in retroactive tax cuts), they leaked the information late Monday evening. The next day the news was buried in a piece on the back page of *The Wall Street Journal* (a favored destination for bad news during the Clinton scandals as well). But by midweek the White House was forced to reveal something it had tried to keep secret about the scandal's proximity to the president: There was a group of senior Bush aides monitoring Enron's demise right there in the White House, just steps from the Oval Office. The very same day the White House announced that, absent a specific accusation of wrongdoing, it would no longer reveal any contacts Bush officials had with Enron.

Mostly, though, when forced to talk about Enron, White House aides stress that Bush never lifted a finger to save the company from bankruptcy. That's a pretty safe tack. After all, who thinks the administration would be stupid enough to try to rescue its largest benefactor during its financial death throes? It would be akin to Bill Clinton sneaking Monica back into the Oval Office for one last romp just as impeachment hearings were getting under way. What the Bushies don't want to talk about is what the administration did for its largest donor *before* the whole world was watching. When the company was accused of price-gouging Californians last year, it solicited the administration's opposition to price caps. It also influenced Bush's energy plan, made personnel recommendations, and lobbied hard for the repeal of the corporate alternative minimum tax, which was included in the House tax bill endorsed by Bush. In an interview last August, Lay actually threatened the government of India with U.S. trade sanctions if he didn't get his way in a dispute over a power plant in Dabhol. These are not episodes the administration is itching to explore, because they occurred when the White House was not yet obsessed with keeping Bush and his immediate aides clinically detached from Enron's stench.



The concentric-ring strategy quieted the Enron scandal after four days of smoke but little fire. But at a cost. The administration's vaunted credibility has been dented, and an administration that got tremendous political mileage in its first year because of the widespread assumption that it was ethically superior to the Clintonites now may no longer enjoy the benefit of that doubt. The president's Oval Office performance has even been condemned by pro-Bush stalwart George Will as "Clintonian." And mounting media cynicism is affecting issues beyond Enron. Some in Washington greeted the White House version of Bush's fainting episode with disbelief. Coverage of Bush on the road is more critical than it has been since 9/11. On Tuesday *The New York Times* busted him for misstating the facts surrounding China's entry into the World Trade Organization, and *The Washington Post* corrected his assertion that the tax cut is permanent (by law it expires in ten years). And all this comes just as the White House is starting its p.r. campaign to sell its new budget—a document that will call for some painful cuts and would benefit from a more credulous public. But then again, maybe nobody will be paying attention to the budget anyway. It will be released on February 4, which just happens to be the day the Senate is scheduled to hear the dramatic testimony of that old Ann Richards supporter, Kenneth Lay. ■

On the Hill

Power Surge

By MICHAEL CROWLEY

THINK DEMOCRATS ARE excited about their upcoming hearings on the Enron debacle? With fully ten congressional committees planning hearings over the coming weeks, Democratic staffers are practically tripping over one another to promote their own productions. "We were the first committee to announce we were having a hearing, back on November 29," boasts the spokesman for New Mexico Democrat Jeff Bingaman, chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. Not so, argues a spokesman for North Dakota's Byron Dorgan, who chairs the Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Consumer Affairs. "Dorgan held the first hearing," he says, back on December 18. Hmm. OK, well what makes each of these hearings special? Bingaman's spokesman assures that his boss's will be the most sober and evenhanded. "This thing is becoming pretty politicized among Republicans and Democrats. [Bingaman's] interest is in the *markets*." But Dorgan's flack says much the same thing: "He wants a very methodical and thoughtful approach. There may be other hearings on the Hill that are flashier and move faster." An aide to yet another Democratic senator, for his part, insists that "Dorgan will really overplay it.... He tends to make things a little more in-your-face partisan." According to this aide, "Carl Levin"—who is conducting his own subcommittee hearings—"is the real hope." Got that?

All this spin reveals the contradictory dynamic at work in the Democrats' nascent Enron investigations. On the one hand, everyone wants to be out in front in case the unfolding scandal turns up real dirt on a prominent member of the administration. On the other, they're terrified that if it doesn't, the whole thing will blow up in their faces, making

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them look like partisan hacks. "It's fraught with danger," says an aide to one prominent Senate Democrat. Indeed, the White House has already begun laying the groundwork for a counterattack should the Dems overreach. "They risk looking like a partisan group of politicians who are on a witch hunt," an administration official told *The Washington Times* this week. So individual Democrats are simultaneously telling the press that they are the ones most likely to get to the bottom of the scandal, and that when they do, there may not be a lot there.

THE DEMOCRATS ARE right to worry about scandal overstretch. Few things, after all, did more to erode Republican majorities in the House and Senate in the 1990s than the GOP's endless, largely fruitless, investigations of the Clinton White House. Republican Al D'Amato's long hours of interrogating Clintonites in 1996 soured his approval ratings in New York and may have cost him his seat two years later. Tennessee Republican Fred Thompson, once hailed as a presidential contender, also saw his standing plummet after his failed inquiry into foreign donations to the 1996 Clinton-Gore campaign. When his hearings convened, Thompson boldly claimed he would reveal a coordinated plot by the Chinese government to influence American elections. In the end he unearthed plenty of slimy activity, but his hearings, as *The New York Times* put it, "produced [not] a shred of public evidence to substantiate Senator Thompson's charge of Chinese influence." Later the senator grumbled about the daunting challenge he'd faced. "It's a big malleable mess. It's a bunch of different scandals all intertwined, but it has no consistent story line." Already, after a few weeks spent discussing accounting firms and shell companies and derivatives, Democrats are wondering whether the same description will apply to Enron. "If you claim x and you can only prove half of x—even if half of x is really bad—it's ultimately a failure," frets a leading Democratic strategist.

These days the man sitting in Fred Thompson's seat as chairman of the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee is Joe Lieberman—like Thompson, a presidential hopeful with a reputation for integrity. Lieberman's hearings may wind up being the most visible. But his determination not to blow this reputation has put Lieberman in a tricky position. Cautious by nature, Lieberman has always been sensitive to the perception that he's positioning himself to run for president in 2004, and he is not eager to use his committee chairmanship—which entails primary oversight over the White House—casually. For months Lieberman has kept a wary distance from the combative rhetoric of his House counterpart, Henry Waxman, the ranking Democrat on the House Government Reform Committee. Lieberman has shown little interest, for instance, in Waxman's efforts to pressure the White House to release documents concerning Dick Cheney's energy task force. And while Waxman has written to Paul O'Neill, Don Evans, and Andy Card demanding that they explain their Enron contacts in greater detail, Lieberman took a more judicious view on CBS's "Face the Nation" last weekend: "[W]e've got to ask, where was the federal government and its agencies? Not only back to January twentieth when the Bush administration with all its contacts with Enron took over, but before that." Back to the Clinton administration, in other words—how's that for bipartisan fashion? But while this approach may help Lieberman maintain his high-minded reputation, it doesn't necessarily endear him to his more partisan colleagues. Asked recently what House Democrats expected from Lieberman's hearings, one aide sighed, "We're hoping for the best."

Some familiar partisans are spoiling for the fight—notably Ted Kennedy, who will eagerly hammer the plight of the little guy at his Senate Labor Committee hearings. But most Democratic presidential contenders are performing their own versions of Lieberman's balancing act. For instance, Massachusetts Senator John Kerry, rarely reluctant to bash the White House, has been measured on the topic of Enron—although he does plan to introduce legislation updating worker pension regulations soon. And other prominent Dems are still biding their time. Hillary Clinton has kept her own counsel thus far, as have Democratic leaders Dick Gephardt and Tom Daschle (who are traveling this week in the Middle East and Central Asia, respectively).

But beneath the façade of serene disinterest, competition among at least seven Democratic investigations is fierce. One source familiar with the situation says there have already been disputes between committees about where key witnesses will appear first. Ask Enron superlawyer Robert Bennett about the Senate, and he'll rail against "a legion of committees and subcommittees fighting for jurisdiction and airtime on this." Bennett says the pace of document leaks to the media has already convinced him that a "competition between committees" to make the biggest splash is already underway.

The irony is that in the end none of them may make much of a splash. In the absence of a smoking gun—which few in Congress anticipate, even privately—Democrats will be happy simply to grind down the White House in the media for a few weeks. "This isn't a scandal so much as a p.r. problem which emphasizes [Bush's] political deficiency: People don't think he's on their side," says the Democratic strategist. "[It's] the Marie Antoinette problem." And it's coming soon to a hearing room near you. ■

How Arthur Andersen got away with it.

Peer Revue

By NOAM SCHEIBER

GIVEN THE BY now well-publicized lapses of its most notorious client, it came as something of a surprise this month when Enron's auditor, Arthur Andersen, passed its triennial peer review "without qualification." A release on the company's website does note three mysterious "issues" raised by the reviewing firm, fellow accounting

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giant Deloitte & Touche, but adds that they were "not deemed significant enough to affect the opinion." The implication, as a *Washington Post* article on the matter concluded, is that "the investing public can have confidence in audits performed by [Andersen]."

A more precise parsing of Deloitte & Touche's findings, however, would be that investors can have confidence in Andersen's audits—as long as they don't have the misfortune to have invested in Enron, or any other company whose audits by Andersen proved controversial. The reason is that when accounting firms review each other's work, they generally exclude any audits where litigation may be pending. (Such litigation is not uncommon: Over the last five years Andersen alone has been sued for its handling of inflated earnings at Waste Management, Inc. and Sunbeam Corp.) It's as if a college student's grade point average were determined only after excluding all the classes in which he'd done poorly.

Of course, any review of Andersen that excludes Enron—the largest corporate meltdown in history—is for all intents and purposes useless. So, days after the results were publicized, Charles Bowsher, head of the Public Oversight Board, the organization responsible for overseeing the accounting industry's peer-review process, ordered that the issues highlighted by Enron's case be examined retrospectively. But Bowsher's decision ultimately misses the point. The real scandal of Andersen's peer review isn't that Enron wasn't examined; it's that even if it had been, Andersen would still have earned a passing grade.

WHEN CONGRESS PASSED the Securities Act of 1933 it decided—under pressure from the major accounting firms—to forego active regulation of the industry. Instead, it merely drew broad guidelines and relied largely on the industry to apply them. But the attempts at self-regulation produced one weak regime after another: the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants' (AICPA) Committee on Accounting Procedure in 1939; AICPA's Accounting Principles Board in 1959; the Financial Accounting Standards Board in 1973. None reduced accounting fraud to an acceptable level.

So in the late 1970s the major accounting firms made a final effort to stave off real government oversight, proposing a system of peer review in which each firm would have its audits scrutinized by another firm once every three years. The process is supposed to ensure that a given accounting firm has appropriate quality-control procedures in place—everything from how it selects employees for a given assignment to how it attracts and retains clients—and that it adheres to those procedures when conducting its audits. For instance, "they might try to find examples where one of the managers on the audit had a disagreement with management, brought it to a partner, and see how it was handled," explains University of Chicago accounting professor Roman Weil.

Overall, the triennial review must examine enough cases to cover between 3 percent and 6 percent of a Big Five firm's total audit hours over the previous year. (Amazingly, the two years prior are off-limits.) And though within that range the peer reviewer has broad discretion over which audits to examine, there are certain categories of audits that must be included: an audit that involved several of a firm's different offices; an audit of a public entity like a municipal government; an audit of a company's employee-benefits plan.

WHAT THE PEER review *doesn't* include is anything that might ordinarily be thought of as a reasonable fail-safe: say, picking an audit at random, reworking the numbers from scratch, and seeing if those numbers jibe with the original audit. "They're not tracing transactions," Weil concedes. On the rare occasion that a peer-review auditor actually does examine another auditor's paperwork, the point is not to do a so-called reaudit, but simply to make sure that the numbers documented by the original auditor look plausible. The problem with this is that accounting is notoriously dependent on judgment calls—what future economic benefits are likely to be derived from a given asset, whether losses can be characterized as one-time or recurring, etc. Since the logic behind these judgment calls never actually makes it into the final documentation, there's no way for a reviewer to gauge their soundness. "All that they're looking at is whatever the people that did the audit happened to record," explains Douglas Carmichael, a former vice president of AICPA (the industry's standard-setting body) and an accounting professor at Baruch College. Worse, Carmichael points out, even when a reviewer has reason to suspect that the original auditor failed to scrutinize something, the original auditor can always claim that he or she applied the necessary scrutiny and plead guilty to the relatively minor offense of "failing to document."

In fact, these are exactly the sort of problems that arose prior to Arthur Andersen's last peer review. In 1997 Andersen had discerned that Enron's stated earnings of $105 million actually looked more like $54 million when accounted for properly. But when it pointed this out to Enron's financial officers, they protested that the error was less than 8 percent of normalized income—that is, income averaged over several preceding years—and was therefore acceptable under a widely invoked "materiality" provision. (The idea is that auditors are not responsible for errors so small they might plausibly fall below their radar screen.) Andersen relented and signed off on the original $105 million figure. When Deloitte & Touche completed its peer review the following year, it would have had no way of exposing this bit of sophistry, assuming it even examined the Enron audit. Without being privy to the logic behind the decision, "the peer reviewer [would not have been] in a position to challenge the judgment the auditor applied," complains one former Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) official. Not surprisingly, Deloitte & Touche obliged with a passing grade.

Since then, we now know, Enron's accounting has gotten progressively shadier. For example, the company created

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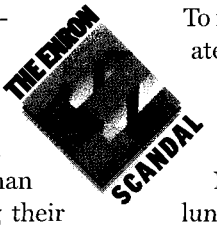
dozens of special partnerships specifically to hide hundreds of millions of dollars in debt from investors and credit-rating agencies. And Andersen's auditing, it seems, has deteriorated as well. Last Thursday the company admitted it had destroyed numerous documents relating to Enron, some of which may well have disclosed this shell game. Ironically, part of what a peer reviewer is supposed to do is determine whether a firm's documentation policies make sense. But since a peer reviewer only actually looks at *existing* documents (rather than, say, generating his own documents for comparison), beyond very obvious omissions it's difficult to determine what kinds of documents a firm might have thrown away. Indeed, says the former SEC official, there's little reason to expect that Deloitte & Touche would have suspected any improper document shredding at Andersen—let alone looked into what the shredded documents contained—even if it *had* examined the Enron audit. Thanks to Enron's spectacular collapse, this task will now fall to Congress, the Justice Department, and the SEC.

ENRON IS AN egregious case, but it's less an anomaly than an extreme example of the efforts at "earnings management" that have become quite common in corporate America in recent years. During the 1990s Wall Street grew so fixated on analysts' quarterly-earnings expectations that failing to meet them by even a single penny per share could send a company's stock price tumbling. So, rather than disappoint the market, companies took to fudging their numbers. Some tried Enron's materiality gambit, albeit in less brazen ways. Others tried what's known as "revenue recognition," whereby a company records sales in one quarter even though it won't actually receive payment until the next. (The recently humbled Microstrategy made this particular "microstrategy" famous.) But perhaps the most widespread approach was what's known as "big bath accounting." That's when a corporation inflates profits by writing off years of future expenses as a one-time "restructuring cost."



Of course, once everyone realized that so many companies were bending the rules to meet expectations, it became all the more damning to fail to meet them. As one stockbroker told the *Harvard Business Review* last year, "Things must be pretty bad if Cisco can't manage to come up with one lousy penny." Companies that still fell short of expectations were punished even more severely, raising the stakes even higher and encouraging companies to bend the rules still further. This vicious cycle had accelerated so much that, according to a recent study by the Levy Institute Forecasting Center, an economic research and consulting group, corporate earnings for the S&P 500 may have been inflated by as much as 20 percent at the height of the boom.

For their part, the Big Five auditors were loath to blow the whistle. After all, over the last two decades the big accounting firms have taken to viewing their auditing services as "loss leaders" that get them in the door, at which point they can sell their clients far more lucrative consulting services. But with big consulting contracts on the line, it isn't exactly in an auditor's interest to begin questioning his client's math. That left peer review as the only line of defense.

As the lax standards of the peer-review regime demonstrate, the system wasn't designed to catch any of this. But even if it had been—and there are reports that the SEC is negotiating with the industry over a tough, new self-regulatory body—the Big Five accounting firms would probably have been no more inclined to expose one another than they were to expose companies like Enron. Part of the reason, no doubt, is the sense that one hand washes the other. If Deloitte & Touche lets Andersen off easy, presumably Andersen will be inclined to do the same when it comes time to conduct its own review. But it goes deeper than that. Indeed, over the years the Big Five firms—down from the Big Eight as recently as 1989, and the Big Six as recently as 1997, as the result of mergers—have often behaved less like competitors than corporate partners. Among other things, they all belong to the same insurance pool. That means any time one of them has to cough up a wad of cash to settle a potential fraud case, it raises the insurance premiums for the other four. With that kind of incentive why would any of them ever rat on the other?

To make things even cozier, the Big Five firms have created a network of extremely close relationships between their in-house lawyers. According to an October 2000 *BusinessWeek* article, the general counsels of the Big Five accounting firms meet in New York once every six weeks to talk shop over lunch. Among the topics of conversation? How best to avoid audits that might require one firm to cast doubt on the work of another. This arrangement paid off for Deloitte & Touche in 1991. That year a little-known New Jersey thrift named Fidelity Mutual Savings and Loan Association discovered that one of its vice presidents had spent the previous 16 years defrauding it to the tune of $6 million. Confused at how this minor detail escaped its auditor's attention, Fidelity hired rival firm KPMG to investigate. Roger Ham, the lead investigator, concluded that the scam was only possible because of numerous failings on the part of Deloitte & Touche. Indeed, his initial report used some form of the word "failure" no fewer than ten times. But rather than accept that judgment, Deloitte's general counsel (again, according to *BusinessWeek*) simply picked up the phone and called his counterpart at KPMG. The final "revised" report contained not a single mention of "failure."

WITH THIS KIND of chumminess, it's no mystery why no major accounting firm has ever received a failing peer-review grade. And even when a review, like Andersen's this year, contains qualifications, they're usually quickly forgotten: As soon as the next triennial review is completed, the previous one is removed from public display. When I called AICPA to get a copy of Andersen's 1998 peer review, a spokesman there told me, "We shred 'em, get rid of 'em" once the new one is done. Sounds like a pretty good suggestion for the entire peer-review process. ■

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

A Couple of Geniuses

ERWIN PISCATOR, THE famous German theater director, spent the 1940s in New York, where I knew him slightly. One day in 1944, he invited me to a reception he was giving for an old Berlin friend of his, a playwright who was now living in California and was coming east for a visit. I had met so many German and Austrian theater refugees in the past decade that, heartless though it may sound, I thought I could do without one more. I thanked Piscator but said I would be busy that day, and this is why I did not meet Bertolt Brecht.

Manifold are my regrets. Most of them are obvious. Though I knew little of Brecht's work at the time, I am sure that I would have profited from conversation between him and Piscator. But, odd though it sounds, what I regret most is that I might have found some hint on a personal matter—the source of his attraction. Here was a man who, as I later read and heard, deliberately kept himself slovenly, even dirty, who was utterly self-centered, who smoked cigars incessantly without regard for the wishes of others, who was imperious, demanding, flauntingly unreliable; yet around whom people flocked. Women, particularly, fawned over him, fought for him, sometimes in groups. Maybe an afternoon's meeting might have given me a clue about the questions that came along later.

Jan Schütte, a German film-maker, has made **The Farewell** (New Yorker) as if to answer my questions. (It opened at the Film Forum in New York.) Schütte's film doesn't answer them, any more than my (missed) meeting with Brecht could have done, but the purpose of *The Farewell* is to show the Brecht court in action, its monarch and its courtiers, and how it operated. If the film does not precisely answer the questions, at any rate it dramatizes them by allowing us to eavesdrop. With a screenplay by the acute playwright-screenwriter Klaus Pohl, who wrote the memorable *Otomo*, *The Farewell* makes vivid the Brecht atmospherics—in art and in politics and in dailyness.

The time is the last days of Brecht's life, August, 1956; the setting is back in Germany at the summer place that the GDR has given him at Buckow outside Berlin. Present with him—and this is factual—are his wife, the actress Helene Weigel (the most famous Mother Courage); Ruth Berlau, a former mistress whom he has driven to alcoholism with his inattention and who begs for a return to intimacy; Isot Kilian, a young woman whose politically dissident husband Wolfgang Harich openly shares her with Brecht; a young actress named Käthe Reichel, also a mistress, whom Brecht is coaching for his theater company; and Elisabeth Hauptmann, his secretary, who is believed by many to have contributed substantially to some of Brecht's plays. Peripherally present, too, is Brecht's beer-swilling daughter Barbara.

The fifty-eight-year-old Brecht is played with weight and quiet and imperturbable authority by Josef Bierbichler. He gives us a man so used to adulation that it no longer flatters or embarrasses him, and whose main method of dealing with opposition is not to reply but to examine the reasons for the questions. He is not a mere sultan, but he tacitly uses his stature as a means to gratifications, large and small. By 1956 he was a widely recognized genius—of drama, of theater directing, of theater aesthetics, and, most particularly, of poetry. (The poems are lesser known here than his plays, although, as Michael Wood has said of them, they are "obviously major work.") Unkempt, unshaven, egocentric, he is a sun around which planets revolve.

Brecht is now ill with heart trouble, though he continues smoking. Eric Bentley, who had worked with him in America, visited him two months before these last days and said he looked "physically shrunken"; in the film he looks solid. Perhaps Pohl and Schütte used dramatic license here to heighten the contrast between self and fate. At the end of the film Brecht leaves for Berlin to rehearse his company. A closing line tells us that three days later he died of a heart attack.

Enough of his poetry, his thought, his theater is included in the film to give him artistic and intellectual being. His political difficulties, and those of the people around him, figure strongly and show how, with Weigel's help, Brecht kept his head above the police-state currents. But the film's best accomplishment is in portraying the man as man. For any viewer, *The Farewell* is an engrossing visit to the bizarre household of a sly yet candid master. For those already concerned with Brecht, the film is another occasion almost to chuckle at the sheer brass of a man, justified—in his own mind, at least—by genius.

A Beautiful Mind (Universal) is another attempt to deal with genius and its problems. This time the genius is mathematical, and the problems are not political or social but mental. John Forbes Nash Jr. did brilliant work at Princeton in the late 1940s, slipped into schizophrenia, struggled recurrently with it, and was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economic Science in 1994.

But the screenplay by Akiva Goldsman is a glossy example of how a troubled and troublesome life can be sanitized into a Movieland saga. The messy dissonances of Nash's life, sexual and social and otherwise (all publicly available), have been transmuted into a homophonic drama—a protagonist battles an obstacle, with his wife at his side, and wins through to success. In fact, Nash and his wife were divorced and remarried, and he got the prize for work that he had done years earlier as a young man. When Goldsman was jogged about the omissions and alterations in his script, he said, "This was never a biopic." That is true. But what sort of pic did Goldsman think he was contriving?

We follow Nash through his graduate-school days, then to his employment both as a teacher and as a codebreaker for the U.S. military. He marries and has a child; then the paranoia that brought him to schizophrenia obtrudes past concealment, and we learn that all his secret government work has been his sheer fantastication. (The director, Ron Howard, tampers a bit with this fantasizing: in the military scenes we occasionally glimpse actions behind Nash's back that he couldn't possibly have imagined.) His recovery, such as it is, and his subsequent life, and the Nobel ceremony, conclude matters.

Jennifer Connelly, as his wife, is warm and proud, frightened and brave. Ed Harris, as the non-existent secret agent who attends Nash constantly, is granitic. Christopher Plummer, as Nash's psychiatrist, is insufficiently used. Nash is played by Russell Crowe, and I am quirky enough to say that, within the bounds of the film, his dilemma as actor is more interesting than Nash's. The latter's agony is confined to the sequences of mental unbalance.

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Crowe's dilemma is before us for the film's entire one-hundred-thirty-four minutes.

Crowe is an intelligent and searching actor. Whether he is the careful complainant in *The Insider* or the robustious action hero in *Gladiator*, we feel that he wants to know why he is doing what he does and how he can unify everything into a cogent whole. He certainly applies that intelligence and search to the role of Nash. But one element that Crowe unfortunately does not have, not a dram of it, is charm, appeal, charisma. He is not an intrinsically attractive man, and in an unattractive role the problem is compounded. When Dustin Hoffman played an autistic man in *Rain Man*, when Debra Winger played a mentally impaired woman in *A Dangerous Woman*, they took us with them because, sheerly as theater figures, they compel. Crowe, despite his best efforts, doesn't move us much: he only makes us impatient for the wheels of the story to turn more quickly. ■

A letter to George Kennan.

On Human Dignity

By Isaiah Berlin

This letter was written in response to an appreciative letter from George Kennan about Berlin's essay "Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century," which appeared in the "mid-century issue" of Foreign Affairs *in 1950. The essay is one of the important documents of twentieth-century liberalism. It was reprinted in 1969 in* Four Essays on Liberty, *where Berlin commented in a note about the journal in which it was originally published that "its tone was to some extent due to the policies of the Soviet regime during Stalin's last years. Since then a modification of the worst excesses of that dictatorship has fortunately taken place; but the general tendency with which the issue was concerned seems, to me, if anything, to have gained, if not in intensity, then in extent: some of the new national states of Asia and Africa seem to show no greater concern for civil liberties, even allowing for the exigencies of security and planning which these states need for their development and survival, than the regimes they have replaced."*

New College, Oxford
13 February 1951

Dear George,

I have ill rewarded your wonderful letter by leaving it so long unanswered. I received it towards the end of term here when I was genuinely worn out by teaching and examining, and scarcely capable of taking anything in, but even then it moved me profoundly. I took it off with me to Italy and read it and re-read it, and kept putting off the day on which I would write an answer worthy of it, but no such day ever came. I began many letters but each seemed trivial, and what the Russians call *suetlivo* ["in a fussy or bustling manner"]—full of hurrying sentences, scattered and moving in all directions at once, inappropriate either to the theme or to your words about it; but I cannot bear (if only because of the feelings which your letter excited in me) to say nothing merely because I am not sure how much I have to say. So you must forgive me if what I write is chaotic, not merely in form but in substance, and does little justice to your thesis. I shall simply go on and hope for the best, and beg you to pardon me if I am wasting your time.

I must begin by saying that you have put in words something which I believe not only to be the centre of the subject but something which, perhaps because of a certain reluctance to face the fundamental moral issue on which everything turns, I failed to say; but once forced to face it, I realise both that it is craven to sail round it as I have done, and moreover that it is, in fact, what I myself believe, and deeply believe, to be true; and more than this: that upon one's attitude to this issue, which you have put very plainly, and very, if I may say so, poignantly, depends one's entire moral outlook, i.e. everything one believes.

Let me try and say what I think it is; you say (and I am not quoting) that every man possesses a point of weakness, an Achilles' heel, and by exploiting this a man may be made a hero or a martyr or a rag. Again, if I understand you correctly, you think that Western civilisation has rested upon the principle that, whatever else was permitted or forbidden, the one heinous act which would destroy the world was to do precisely this—the deliberate act of tampering with human beings so as to make them behave in a way which, if they knew what they were doing, or what its consequences were likely to be, would make them recoil with horror and disgust. The whole of the Kantian morality (and I don't know about Catholics, but Protestants, Jews, Muslims and high-minded atheists believe it) lies in this; the mysterious phrase about men being "ends in themselves," to which much lip-service has been paid, with not much attempt to explain it, seems to lie in this: that every human being is assumed to possess the capacity to choose what to do, and what to be, however narrow the limits within which his choice may lie, however hemmed in by circumstances beyond his control; that all human love and respect rests upon the attribution of conscious motives in this sense; that all the categories, the concepts, in terms of which we think about and act towards one another—goodness, badness, integrity and lack of it, the attribution of dignity or honour to others which we must not insult or exploit, the entire cluster of ideas such as honesty, purity of motive, courage, sense of truth, sensibility, compassion, justice; and, on the other side, brutality, falseness, wickedness, ruthlessness, lack of scruple, corruption, lack of feelings, emptiness—all these notions in terms of which we think of others and ourselves, in terms of which conduct is assessed, purposes adopted—all this becomes meaningless unless we think of human beings as capable of pursuing ends for their own sakes by deliberate acts of choice—which alone makes nobility noble and sacrifices sacrifices.

The whole of that morality, which is most prominent in the nineteenth century, in particular in the romantic period, but implicit in both Christian and Jewish writings, and far less present in the pagan world, rests on the view that it is a marvellous thing in itself when a man pits himself against the world, and sacrifices himself to an ideal without reckoning the consequences, even when we consider his ideal false and its consequences disastrous. We admire purity of motive as such, and think it a wonderful thing—or at any rate deeply impressive, perhaps to be fought but never despised—when somebody throws away material advantage, reputation etc. for the sake of bearing witness to something which he believes to be true, however mistaken and fanatical we may think him to be. I do not say that we worship passionate self-

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abandonment or automatically prefer a desperate fanaticism to moderation and enlightened self-interest. Of course not; yet nevertheless we do think such conduct deeply moving, even when misdirected. We admire it *always* more than calculation; we at least understand the kind of aesthetic splendour which all defiance has for some people—Carlyle, Nietzsche, Leontiev [Konstantin Nikolaevich Leontiev, nineteenth-century Russian philosopher and critic] and Fascists generally. We think that only those human beings are a credit to their kind who do not let themselves be pushed too far by the forces of nature or history, either passively or by glorying in their own impotence; and we idealise only those who have purposes for which they accept responsibility, on which they stake something, and at times everything; living consciously and bravely for whatever they think good, i.e. worth living and, in the last resort, dying for.

ALL THIS MAY seem an enormous platitude, but, if it is true, this is, of course, what ultimately refutes utilitarianism and what makes Hegel and Marx such monstrous traitors to our civilisation. When, in the famous passage, Ivan Karamazov rejects the worlds upon worlds of happiness which may be bought at the price of the torture to death of one innocent child, what can utilitarians, even the most civilised and humane, say to him? After all, it is in a sense unreasonable to throw away so much human bliss purchased at so small a price as *one*—only one—innocent victim, done to death however horribly—what after all is one soul against the happiness of so many? Nevertheless, when Ivan says he would rather return the ticket, no reader of Dostoevsky thinks this cold-hearted or mad or irresponsible; and although a long course of Bentham or Hegel might turn one into a supporter of the Grand Inquisitor, qualms remain.

Ivan Karamazov cannot be totally exorcised; he speaks for us all, and this I take to be your point, and the foundation of your optimism. What I take you to say, and what I should have said myself if I had had the wit or the depth, is that the one thing which no utilitarian paradise, no promise of eternal harmony in the future within some vast organic whole will make us accept is the use of human beings as mere means—the doctoring of them until they are made to do what they do, not for the sake of the purposes which are their purposes, fulfilment of hopes which however foolish or desperate are at least their own, but for reasons which only we, the manipulators, who freely twist them for our purposes, can understand. What horrifies one about Soviet or Nazi practice is not merely the suffering and the cruelty, since although that is bad enough, it is something which history has produced too often, and to ignore its apparent inevitability is perhaps real Utopianism—no; what turns one inside out, and is indescribable, is the spectacle of one set of persons who so tamper and "get at" others that the others do their will without knowing what they are doing; and in this lose their status as free human beings, indeed as human beings at all.

WHEN ARMIES WERE slaughtered by other armies in the course of history, we might be appalled by the carnage and turn pacifist; but our horror acquires a new dimension when we read about children, or for that matter grown-up men and women, whom the Nazis loaded into trains bound for gas chambers, telling them that they were going to emigrate to some happier place. Why does this deception, which may in fact have diminished the anguish of the victims, arouse a really unutterable kind of horror in us? The spectacle, I mean, of the victims marching off in happy ignorance of their doom amid the smiling faces of their tormentors? Surely because we cannot bear the thought of human beings denied their last rights—of knowing the truth, of acting with at least the freedom of the condemned, of being able to face their destruction with fear or courage, according to their temperaments, but at least as human beings, armed with the power of choice. It is the denial to human beings of the possibility of choice, the getting them into one's power, the twisting them this way and that in accordance with one's whim, the destruction of their personality by creating unequal moral terms between the gaoler and the victim, whereby the gaoler knows what he is doing, and why, and plays upon the victim, i.e. treats him as a mere object and not as a subject whose motives, views, intentions have any intrinsic weight whatever—by destroying the very possibility of his having views, notions of a relevant kind—that is what cannot be borne at all.

What else horrifies us about unscrupulousness if not this? Why is the thought of someone twisting someone else round his little finger, even in innocent contexts, so beastly (for instance in Dostoevsky's *Dyadyushkin son* [*Uncle's Dream*, a novella published in 1859], which the Moscow Arts Theatre used to act so well and so cruelly)? After all, the victim may prefer to have no responsibility; the slave be happier in his slavery. Certainly we do not detest this kind of destruction of liberty *merely* because it denies liberty of action; there is a far greater horror in depriving men of the very capacity for freedom—that is the real sin against the Holy Ghost. Everything else is bearable so long as the possibility of goodness—of a state of affairs in which men freely choose, disinterestedly seek ends for their own sake—is still open, however much suffering they may have gone through. Their souls are destroyed only when this is no longer possible. It is when the desire for choice is broken that what men do thereby loses all moral value, and actions lose all significance (in terms of good and evil) in their own eyes; that is what is meant by destroying people's self-respect, by turning them, in your words, into rags. This is the ultimate horror because in such a situation there are no worthwhile motives left: nothing is worth doing or avoiding, the reasons for existing are gone. We admire Don Quixote, if we do, because he has a pure-hearted desire to do what is good, and he is pathetic because he is mad and his attempts are ludicrous.

FOR HEGEL AND for Marx (and possibly for Bentham, although he would have been horrified by the juxtaposition) Don Quixote is not merely absurd but immoral. Morality consists in doing what is good. Goodness is that which will satisfy one's nature. Only that will satisfy one's nature which is part of the historical stream along which one is carried willy-nilly, i.e. that which "the future" in any case holds in store. In some ultimate sense, failure is proof of a misunderstanding of history, of having chosen what is doomed to destruction, in preference to that which is destined to succeed. But to choose the former is "irrational," and since morality is rational choice, to seek that which will not come off is immoral. This doctrine that the moral and the good is the successful, and that failure is not only unfortunate but wicked, is at the heart of all that is most horrifying both in utilitarianism and in "historicism" of the Hegelian, Marxist type. For if only that were best which made one happiest in the long run, or that which accorded with some mysterious plan of history, there really would be no reason to "return the ticket." Provided that there was a reasonable probability that the new Soviet man might either be happier, even in some very long run, than his predecessors, or that history would be bound sooner or later to produce someone like him whether we liked it or not, to protest against him would be mere silly romanticism, "subjective," "idealistic," ultimately irresponsible. At most we would argue that the Russians were factually wrong and the Soviet method not the best for producing this desirable or inevitable type of man. But of course what we violently reject is not these questions of fact, but the very idea that

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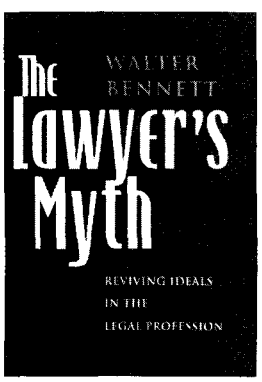
there are any circumstances in which one has a right to get at, and shape, the characters and souls of other men for purposes which these men, if they realised what we were doing, might reject.

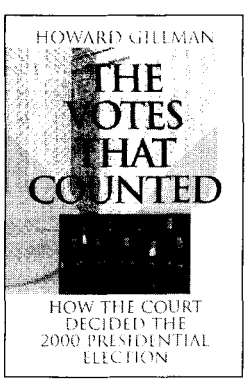
We distinguish to this extent between factual and value judgement—that we deny the right to tamper with human beings to an unlimited extent, *whatever* the truth about the laws of history; we might go further and deny the notion that "history" in some mysterious way "confers" upon us "rights" to do this or that; that some men or bodies of men can morally claim a right to our obedience because they, in some sense, carry out the behests of "history," are its chosen instrument, its medicine or scourge or in some important sense "*Welthistorisch*"—great, irresistible, riding the waves of the future, beyond our petty, subjective, not rationally bolsterable ideas of right and wrong. Many a German and I daresay many a Russian or Mongol or Chinese today feels that it is more adult to recognise the sheer immensity of the great events that shake the world, and play a part in history worthy of men by abandoning themselves to them, than by praising or damning and indulging in bourgeois moralisings: the notion that history must be applauded as such is the horrible German way out of the burden of moral choice.

If pushed to the extreme, this doctrine would, of course, do away with all education, since when we send children to school or influence them in other ways without obtaining their approval for what we are doing, are we not "tampering" with them, "moulding" them like pieces of clay with no purpose of their own? Our answer has to be that certainly all "moulding" is evil, and that if human beings at birth had the power of choice and the means of understanding the world, it would be criminal; since they have not, we temporarily enslave them, for fear that, otherwise, they will suffer worse misfortunes from nature and from men, and this "temporary enslavement" is a necessary evil until such time as they are able to choose for themselves—the "enslavement" having as its purpose not an inculcation of obedience but its contrary, the development of power of free judgement and choice; still, evil it remains, even if necessary.

Communists and Fascists maintain that this kind of "education" is needed not only for children but for entire nations for long periods, the slow withering away of the State corresponding to immaturity in the lives of individuals. The analogy is specious because peoples, nations are not individuals and still less children; moreover in promising maturity their practice belies their professions; that is to say, they are lying, and for the most part know that they are. From a necessary evil in the case of the education of helpless children, this kind of practice becomes an evil on a much larger scale, and quite gratuitous, based either on utilitarianism, which misrepresents our moral values, or again on metaphors which misdescribe both what we call good and bad, and the nature of the world, the facts themselves. For we, i.e. those who join with us, are more concerned with making people free than making them happy; we would rather that they chose badly than not at all; because we believe that unless they choose they cannot be either happy or unhappy in any sense in which these conditions are worth having; the very notion of "worth having" presupposes the choice of ends, a system of free preferences; and an undermining of *them* is what strikes us with such cold terror, worse than the most unjust sufferings, which nevertheless leave the possibility of knowing them for what they are—of free judgement, which makes it possible to condemn them—still open.

You say that men who in this way undermine the lives of other men will end by undermining themselves, and the whole evil system is therefore doomed to collapse. In the long run I am sure you are right, because open-eyed cynicism, the





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exploitation of others by men who avoid being exploited themselves, is an attitude difficult for human beings to keep up for very long. It needs too much discipline and appalling strain in an atmosphere of such mutual hatred and distrust as cannot last because there is not enough moral intensity or general fanaticism to keep it going. But still the run can be very long before it is over, and I do not believe that the corrosive force from inside will work away at the rate which perhaps you, more hopefully, anticipate. I feel that we must avoid being inverted Marxists. Marx and Hegel observed the economic corrosion in their lifetime, and so the revolution seemed to be always round the corner. They died without seeing it, and perhaps it would have taken centuries if Lenin had not given history a sharp jolt. Without the jolt, are moral forces alone sufficient to bury the Soviet grave-diggers? I doubt it. But that in the end the worm would eat them I doubt no more than you; but whereas you say that is an isolated evil, a monstrous scourge sent to try us, not connected with what goes on elsewhere, I cannot help seeing it as an extreme and distorted but only too typical form of some general attitude of mind from which our own countries are not exempt.

For saying this, E.H. Carr has attacked me with some violence, in a leading article in *The Times Literary Supplement* last June. This makes me believe I must be even more right than I thought, since his writings are among the more obvious symptoms of what I tried to analyse, and he rightly interprets my articles as an attack on all he stands for. All this comes out particularly in his last oeuvre—on the Russian Revolution—in which the opposition and the victims are not allowed to testify—feeble flotsam adequately taken care of by history, which has swept them away as, being against the current, they, *eo ipso*, deserve. Only the victors deserve to be heard; the rest—Pascal, Pierre Bezukhov, all Chekhov's people, all the critics and casualties of *Deutschtum* or White Man's Burdens, or the American Century, or the Common Man on the March—these are historical dust, *lishnye lyudi* ["superfluous men," in Turgenev's and Dostoevsky's term], those who have missed the bus of history, poor little rats inferior to Ibsenite rebels who are all potential Catilines and dictators. Surely there never was a time when more homage was paid to bullies as such: and the weaker the victim the louder (and sincerer) his paeans—*vide* E.H. Carr, Koestler, Burnham, Laski, *passim*? But I must not waste your time any further.

Once more I should like to say how deeply moved I was by your formulation of what it is that excites in us the unparalleled horror which we feel when we read of what goes on in Soviet territories, and to convey my admiration and unbounded moral respect for the insight and scruple with which you set it forth. These qualities seem to me unique at present; more than this I cannot say.

Yours ever,
[Isaiah]

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Bored of the Rings

By RICHARD JENKYNS

J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century by Tom Shippey

(Houghton Mifflin, 348 pp., $26)

J.R.R. TOLKIEN'S is indeed an extraordinary story, delightful in its improbability. Here was a quiet scholar, conservative, devout, nostalgic for a bygone rural way of life, old-fashioned even in his own generation, learned in the exacting but unglamorous fields of Anglo-Saxon poetry and medieval philology. He was appointed to a professorial chair at Oxford in his mid-thirties, and published one article of huge importance on the Old English epic *Beowulf* but otherwise very little of an academic kind. Instead he devoted immense industry to writing a vast prose epic set in lands of his own invention, which he called Middle-earth.

The Lord of the Rings should have been unpublishable; but Stanley and Rayner Unwin, father-and-son publishers in the London firm George Allan and Unwin, had the perception and courage to put it into print. As all the world knows, it was to become one of the best sellers ever, but it is as remarkable for the diversity as well as the number of the people who have loved it—the tweedy and the hippy, the lookers-back and the droppers-out. Another extraordinary fact is that to create *The Lord of the Rings* Tolkien felt that he had to create much more besides, most of it glimpsed only occasionally or indirectly in the actual text of his epic.

He invented nothing less than a whole continent, diverse in geography and character. He peopled it not only with men—I mean human beings—but also with dwarves, elves, orcs or goblins, hobbits, ents, and other powers. He provided Middle-earth with an entire history across many centuries, a history of which the tale told in *The Lord of the Rings* would be only a tiny part. And he invented languages, credible and consistent in terms of the technical discipline of philology. So his fiction came to have some of the characteristics of scholarship; his epic is a work of fantasy and yet also an exercise in north European medievalism.

In a somewhat disconcerting way, Tolkien seems to have come to live in the world of his own imagining. The noise and the smell of Oxford's traffic he described as "Mordor in our midst." When he went to Venice, he found it "like a dream of Old Gondor, or Pelargir of the Númenorean Ships"—a rather limited response, one might think. Tom Shippey puts it this way: "However fanciful Tolkien's creation of Middle-earth, he did not think that he was *entirely* making it up. He was 'reconstructing,' he was harmonizing contradictions in his source-texts; he was also reaching back to an imaginative world which he believed had once really existed, at least in a collective imagination."

Shippey is himself a medievalist and a philologist, formerly a professor in the very department of the University of Leeds where Tolkien himself taught as a young man, and now in a chair at Saint Louis University, Missouri. He burns with generous indignation at the scorn with which many literary critics have treated Tolkien, and his subtitle, "Author of the Century," is meant to provoke. But provocation is only one of his purposes. His book has three main strands. His first aim is to bring his professional expertise as a medievalist and a philologist to bear on *The Lord of the Rings*, in order to track down Tolkien's sources and to analyze the creative processes that brought Middle-earth into being. His second purpose is to champion the literary quality of Tolkien's work, arguing for its moral depth, its psychological richness, and its technical skill. The third element in the book is

RICHARD JENKYNS is a fellow of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford and the author, most recently, of *Virgil's Experience* (Oxford University Press).

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the knockabout bit: Tolkien's detractors are hauled into court and convicted of snobbery, elitism, professional jealousy, and other kinds of bad faith. It is all very lively: a clear, forceful, engaging, ingenious, sometimes wrongheaded book.

THE FIRST PART of Shippey's book is the coolest. Here he tries to understand how the scheme of *The Lord of the Rings* developed, and much of his argument is that, for Tolkien, philology was fundamental: words, names, and linguistic registers came first, and the plot followed later. When Tolkien started writing his epic, Shippey suggests, he did not at first know where it was going. This may seem surprising and perhaps a little disconcerting. It is not how we expect novels to develop, and the control of a complex plot seems to be one of Tolkien's chief virtues. Yet Shippey's argument, even though aspects of it are avowedly speculative, seems pretty convincing, and it is supported by Tolkien's own account. Indeed, one might compare the conception of *The Lord of the Rings* to the genesis of Tolkien's first work of fiction, *The Hobbit*. A part of Tolkien's legend is that the earlier book originated when he found himself doodling the words "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit"; he had no idea what this meant, and to find out he had to write the book of which it became the opening sentence.

Tolkien's fans should find this scholarly side of Shippey's book very interesting. Shippey's own concern is to establish the philological complexity and consistency of Tolkien's use of names and language. He enjoys tracing the origins of Tolkien's words; he offers "warg," for example, as a "very plain case." In Old Norse, he tells us, "vargr" means both "wolf" and "outlaw." In Old English, "wearh" means "outcast" or "outlaw" (but not "wolf"), and the verb "awyrgan" means "condemn" but also perhaps "worry, bite to death." Tolkien's "warg" combines Old Norse and Old English pronunciations and at the same time joins the idea of wolfishness to a more eerie, less physical sense of intelligent malevolence. In this area of his book, the general thrust of his argument seems to me both right and wrong—right to find in Tolkien a solidity and coherence of imagination lacking in most fantasy fiction, and wrong to think that the "scholarship" of *The Lord of the Rings* immunizes it from criticism; and wrong above all in the assertion that it is an impertinence for literary critics, less scholarly than Tolkien, to find fault with his prose style.

Shippey argues for the aesthetic and ethical richness of Tolkien with energy and verve, but not with complete success. *The Lord of the Rings* poses a primary question: is it a book for adults or for adolescents? That is not—at least not straightforwardly—a question about quality: there are masterpieces of children's literature, after all, and there are countless bad literary novels for the grown-up. *The Hobbit* is undoubtedly a children's book; Auden, who was a great admirer of Tolkien, regarded it as one of the best children's books of the century. It obviously owes a lot to Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*: in both stories the central figure is a dear little timid furry bachelor (the Mole, Bilbo Baggins) who is carried away from his domestic routine; the visit to the gruff solitary Beorn in *The Hobbit* is rather similar to the visit to the gruff solitary Badger in Grahame's story; and both books end with heroic combat before the modest hero's return to his quiet, rustic home.

THE RELUCTANT HERO of *The Hobbit* is a charming and original creation, a portrait drawn with more life perhaps than anything in the magnum opus. A more unusual merit of the book is Tolkien's feeling for the reality of exploring and campaigning: the fatigue, the boredom and discouragement, the constant need to worry about how you will feed yourself. (Compare this to all those books and films in which the heroes have no need to eat or to drink, and stay clean-shaven without recourse to a razor.) Shippey reminds us that Tolkien had fought on the western front in World War I.

There is some inconsistency of tone in *The Hobbit*. The whimsical and even facetious style of the opening—good fun in a jolly-uncle sort of way—seems designed for rather younger children than the grand and rather scary adventures that follow. But it does not matter much, mainly because the conception of the novel's protagonist is of the ordinary, stuck-in-a-rut chap who finds in himself an unexpected stock of resource and courage, has his hour of glory, and then returns to a willing obscurity, like Cincinnatus returning to the plough. An alternative title or subtitle that Tolkien contemplated for the book was "There and Back Again."

The Hobbit, then, is a children's book with some "adult" characteristics, but it remains puzzling that *The Lord of the Rings* should retain so much of the earlier work's tone and structure. It is odd that the hero of this vast epic should still be a dear little creature with furry feet and the comic name Frodo Baggins. The oddity might perhaps be defended by saying that Tolkien is showing us how even humble common folk may be called to heroism, though such a defense sits rather awkwardly with the fact that Frodo is essentially a rentier, while his faithful attendant Sam Gamgee is all too obviously the gratifyingly loyal, deferential, and comic servant of Victorian fiction—Sam Weller without the panache—excluded by his class from more than a secondary role. More worryingly, the English cowpat arcadia of Hobbiton and the Shire, tolerable in *The Hobbit*, is unbearably twee at the start of *The Lord of the Rings*. Even Auden conceded that it was "a little shy-making."

But finally it is what is left out of *The Lord of the Rings* that makes one wonder if this is really a book for adults. Tolkien invented his own mythological world, but it lacks the dignity and the sinew of a real mythology, for it is without religion and essentially without sex. Hobbits may have fur at the bottom of their legs, but they have seem to have no balls at the top; and that pretty much goes for the rest of Middle-earth, too. The women in *The Lord of the Rings* are few and pallid, while *The Hobbit* has no female characters at all: even the giant spiders are regarded by Bilbo as male (the narrative voice uses the unsexed pronoun "it"). The film of *The Lord of the Rings* seems to have tried to beef up the female quotient; but it was surely

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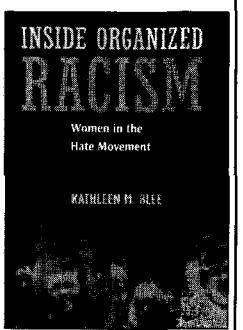

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an uphill struggle. If one is to regard *The Lord of the Rings* as a book for adults, what disturbs is not so much the absence of women, perhaps explicable in an adventure story of this kind, as the absence of desire. In this work that presents itself as the representation of a whole world, there is hardly any awareness that we are sexual beings.

And that is not all that is missing. Tolkien was a devout Roman Catholic of conservative type, and he was sensitive to the charge that his Middle-earth was religionless. He replied that *The Lord of the Rings* was "a fundamentally religious and Catholic work." But that does not get around the difficulty: even if it can be shown that *The Lord of the Rings* is religious as a book—and I doubt whether even this is true in more than the superficial sense that it concerns a struggle of good against evil—the objection is that the people within the story have no religious beliefs or practices, and are thus unlike any real human society. Tolkien always insisted, and rightly, that his work was not an allegory, but the construction of a self-subsistent world with its own history. The trouble is that it is an emotionally impoverished world, in which the blood runs very thin.

The plot of *The Lord of the Rings* is centered upon the need to destroy a ring of corrupting force and immense power by traveling to the far land of Mordor and casting it into the Cracks of Doom. The ring has been in the possession of a strange, cringing creature called Gollum, but it passes into the hands of Frodo the hobbit. Frodo must not only resist his enemies and reach the Mount of Doom, he must also find the strength to overcome the spell of the ring and cast it from him. Tolkien's critics have complained that the moral economy of the work is radically flawed—that there is a confusion between whether the corrupting ring symbolizes sinful desire (the lust for power, or whatever) or should be seen as a magical object that acts upon the wearer as an external force. The complaint, I think, is justified, as can be seen from a comparison with Wagner's *The Ring of the Nibelung*. (Shippey, surprisingly, does not mention Wagner at all.)

According to Humphrey Carpenter's biography, Tolkien was irritated when parallels were drawn between the *Nibelungenlied* or Wagner's adaptation of it and his own work. To one such comparison he retorted that both rings were round and that was the sum of it. But there is a real perplexity here. If Tolkien really believed that there was no German influence upon his ring, he is likely to have been self-deceived. If he did examine Wagner during the years in which he wrote his own epic, how did it affect him? If he did not examine Wagner, he was oddly incurious. He does seem to have been a man of intense but very limited interests, sealed off from the culture of his own time within the imaginary world that he created for himself.

The ring in Wagner is a magical object, but it also represents moral choice and its consequences. Alberich renounces love in order to get hold of the Rhine gold from which he forges the ring; and Wotan needs the gold for reasons of power and splendor. Tolkien finds no equivalent to this. Frodo appears to have no intrinsic lust for power, wealth, or glory, and the supposedly corrupting effect of the ring upon him seems to be external to his nature, forcibly and arbitrarily imposed from without. Shippey battles valiantly and ingeniously to rescue Tolkien from this criticism: his solution is to propose that the ring's effect should be seen as equivalent to an addiction. But this does not help much: we say that someone is acting under the force of an addiction precisely to relieve him of moral responsibility. Perhaps Frodo's situation is like that of a person who has been given an injection of heroin and now finds himself in danger of dependency. But, if so, that is not morally interesting.

Shippey is impressed by the fact that Tolkien does not give *The Lord of the Rings* a conventionally happy ending: Frodo returns to the Shire, his mission accomplished, but he is permanently wounded in spirit. Sadly, it is hard to share Shippey's belief in the moral and psychological depth of this outcome. It is here that the relationship to *The Hobbit* is perhaps most debilitating. "There and back again" was all right in a book of more modest scope and ambition, but at the end of so huge an epic it is not enough. But "there and back again" is basically what we get.

Tolkien, in sum, was unable to develop his hero. Frodo has learned nothing: he is essentially the same person that he was when the adventure started, except that now he is depressed. All that Tolkien can imagine is regress, a return by the hobbits to the darling little Beatrix Potter world from which they began. Admittedly, Frodo is no longer at ease in this world, but Tolkien is unable to convey anything beyond the fact of a psychic wound—no enlargement or transformation of experience, and no philosophy of grand disillusionment, either. He is merely a person who has had a terrible time, and of course you cannot expect him not to be a little queer after all he has endured. As for Sam, the faithful retainer, he settles back quietly into tubby rusticity and picturesque anecdotage as though nothing much had happened. Contrast *Parsifal*, to turn to Wagner again: the hero of that opera starts as a man without experience, but he learns and changes. He discovers sexuality and self-mastery, compassion and understanding. All such growth is beyond Tolkien's range.

More than with most books, I suspect that one's response to *The Lord of the Rings* is affected by the age at which one reads it. I read it in my early twenties, which is to say, I read it late: friends who loved the work had usually devoured it greedily in their teens. I was surprised to find it harder going than I expected: it was partly, I think, a lack of sparkle in the prose, and partly the excess of pointlessly explicit description, dragged down by what Jane Austen called "too many particulars of right hand and of left."

It looks as though Middle-earth came to be too real to Tolkien: he writes about it like a historian, filling in all the details, and not like a novelist, selecting, implying, and picking out *le petit fait signicatif*. It would be easy to quote a flabby passage, but it might be kinder to take one cited by Shippey himself an example of "one of many brilliant passages of natural description in *The Lord of the Rings*":

> A golden afternoon of late sunshine lay warm and drowsy upon the hidden land between. In the midst of it there wound lazily a dark river of brown water, bordered with ancient willows, arched over with willows, blocked with fallen willows, and flecked with thousands of willow-leaves. The air was thick with them, fluttering yellow from the branches; for there was a warm and gentle breeze blowing softly in the valley, and the reeds were rustling, and the willow-boughs were creaking.

Well, that may not be bad writing, but it is not distinguished either. It is merely pleasant in a conventional, sub-Tennysonian manner.

At the back of one's mind lurks the suspicion that Tolkien's eye is not truly alert, that he is interested not in exploration but escape. Despite the orcs and the powers of evil, Middle-earth is somehow a nicer world than ours, in a conservative, cozy sort of way. *The Lord of the Rings* is not in the end so much the creation of an alternative world as of an alternative Europe. In the northwest corner is the Shire, replete with English names, but an England from which cities, industry, and social conflict have been purged.

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(Shippey's notion that Bilbo Baggins and the Shire stand as an equivalent to our modern world is weirdly awry.) And like a northern traveler to southern Europe, Frodo and his companions cross a great range of mountains, and descend into Ithilien, an alternative Italy (*Italien* in German), a landscape dotted with tamarisk and asphodel, olive and bay, and suffused with a pleasing decay: "Ithilien the garden of Gondor now desolate kept still a dishevelled dryad loveliness." The touch of classical allusion is very rare in Tolkien, but alas, the wan pre-Raphaelitish language is common.

TOLKIEN'S STYLE HAS been both loved and loathed. I find it hard to make up my mind. In small quantities, his prose can seem to have a kind of timeless dignity and simplicity, sometimes eloquent, sometimes even moving. But in large quantities it palls: one begins to feel that this writer is writing, very competently, in a dead language. After many pages, one starts to find the style oddly bland and characterless; ultimately it comes to seem, like other things in *The Lord of the Rings*, anemic, and lacking in fiber. Such is the standard prose of the book; when he wants greater elevation, Tolkien tends to resort to archaisms and inversions, and the result is mere tushery.

And the dialogue is pretty poor. Shippey skillfully analyzes the different registers of language used by different speakers in the story—some speak more or less in modern English, others more archaically—but he seems to admire the very things that other readers deplore. Proving that Tolkien's recreations of past speech are philologically pure will do nothing to save him from the charge that he uses variation of language register as a substitute for living speech and natural characterization; and weakness of characterization is one of the work's most conspicuous flaws. I warm to Shippey's spirited defense of philology as a discipline, but the more's the pity that he gives ammunition to its enemies by allowing his philological enthusiasm to swamp his aesthetic sense. Here is an example of dialogue quoted by Shippey himself with apparent approval:

> Mayhap the Sword-that-was-Broken may still stem the tide—if the hand that wields it has inherited not an heirloom only, but the sinews of the Kings of Men.

Here is another example:

> Loth was my father to give me leave.

Does that transport you to a world of romance? It makes me think of Tony Curtis in *The Black Shield of Falworth*: "Yonda is the castle of my fadda."

Here, lastly, is a more extended piece of dialogue, also cited admiringly by Shippey:

> "It is ever so with the things that Men begin: there is a frost in Spring, or a blight in Summer, and they fail of their promise."
>
> "Yet seldom do they fail of their seed," said Legolas. "And that will lie in the dust and rot to spring up again in times and places unlooked-for. The deeds of Men will outlast us, Gimli."
>
> "And yet come to naught in the end but might-have-beens," said the Dwarf.
>
> "To that the Elves know not the answer," said Legolas.

This is writing that aspires to be noble and philosophical, but its nobility seems to me gimcrack.

AUTHOR OF THE CENTURY? One of Shippey's declared reasons for making so grandiose a claim for Tolkien is that "the dominant literary mode of the twentieth century has been the fantastic," and Tolkien is the dominant figure in fantasy fiction. But there is a sleight-of-hand here. It is true that the "great tradition" of the naturalistic literary novel is not very old: it originated essentially in the eighteenth century, and it reached its apogee in the nineteenth. (Apuleius, Rabelais, and Swift were quite different.) And it may be that the naturalist tradition of the novel is nearing its end—though my own guess is that the naturalist novel will flourish for a good while yet, and that fictional modes such as magical realism will prove to have the shorter life, rather in the way that the modernism that produced *Ulysses* and *The Waves* now seems characteristic of a short and specific period.

Shippey cites, as books that come to seem most representative and distinctive of the twentieth century, *The Lord of the Rings*, *1984* and *Animal Farm*, *Lord of the Flies*, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, *Gravity's Rainbow*, and several more. It would be easy enough to draw up an alternative list—Proust, Faulkner, Mann, Solzhenitsyn, Greene, whatever; but the greater sleight-of-hand is in the double use of the term "fantasy." For in an important sense *The Lord of the Rings* is not fantastical at all. Tolkien made Middle-earth consistent with itself even to the point of pedantry. (The Shire was not really called the Shire, Pippin was not really called Pippin, because English had not yet been invented; tobacco and postmen, present in *The Hobbit*, are written out of the later work as anachronisms.)

No, the only genre of which Tolkien stands as representative is the sword-and-sorcery novel. Shippey is no doubt right to claim that Tolkien is far superior to other sword-and-sorcery writers; but this is not, to put it mildly, a genre that has been central to the literature of the last century. And hasn't Shippey chosen exactly the wrong tack? Surely Tolkien's remarkable achievement was not to have ridden the zeitgeist but to have bucked it: to have been so unrepresentative and yet so popular.

Author of the century? Another part of Shippey's claim is simply the assertion that Tolkien has been the most popular or most admired author of the age, and he produces an impressive list of surveys in which Tolkien has topped the poll as the favorite writer of more people than anyone else. But he knows, of course, that popularity is a dodgy criterion. By this standard Danielle Steel is one of the giants of our time. There are plenty of non-literary qualities and even anti-literary qualities that make books popular: prurience, snobbery, fantasies of wealth and power. Books can even have merits that are owed to their lack of literary quality: Agatha Christie's whodunits display an extraordinary ingenuity in their plotting, but the beauty of the puzzle requires cardboard characters and total implausibility in motives and reasons. It is the literary ineptitude of her books that makes the murderer so hard to detect. In Tolkien's case, there are some extra-literary qualities that form at least a part of his appeal to some readers: maps, imaginary languages, the invention of a full alternative world about which one can learn more outside the book itself. It is interesting to find some of these features in other best-sellers: Richard Adams's *Watership Down* comes with a map, and we are given items of rabbit language (pretty nonsensically, since these are supposed to be "real" rabbits, unlike in other animal stories); and there is a made-up language to be learned at Hogwarts Academy, too.

SHIPPEY'S ASSAULT ON Tolkien's detractors is the most swashbuckling part of his book: he makes merry mischief and scores some hits. He may well be right to think that there has been a good deal of intellectual snobbery behind the disparagement of his hero. Still, I doubt that the literati have sneered at Tolkien simply for being popular, as Shippey supposes. Intellectuals have a liking for parts of popular culture: think of the cartloads of highbrow praise justly heaped upon jazz or Elvis or *The Simpsons*. Besides, Shippey appears in part to have misunderstood what he is attacking.

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Some of his adversaries may have been strongly hostile to Tolkien, but what many of them appear to have disliked is not so much Tolkien's work itself as the exaggerated claims made for it.

There is also a suspicion, fair or not, that Tolkien's most ardent fans do not care for any literature other than Tolkien. Shippey adduces a journalist's reaction to the news that *The Lord of the Rings* had yet again topped a poll as most popular book ever: "Oh hell! Has it? Oh my God. Dear oh dear. Dear oh dear oh dear." This is not a brilliant response, but the sentiment behind it is surely sound. One can admire Tolkien a great deal and still regret that so many people believe there to be nothing better. Shippey's "take no prisoners" policy—you are either with Middle-earth or you are with the poncey eggheads—polarizes the debate too much. That is why I have been so hard on Tolkien here: in resisting the claim that he is a literary titan, it is necessary to point to his large deficiencies.

And yet Tolkien's conception does have a genuine grandeur, particularly the counterpoint in the later part of the story between the vast sweep of battle across Middle-earth and what actually matters more, the tiny group crawling across desolation to the fateful summit of the Mount of Doom. He is good at conveying the sense of dark, sinister, shapeless threat (much less good at representing evil itself). And there are some wonderful passages, such as the visit to the talking trees, the ents, perhaps the most magical and evocative thing that he wrote. In his way he was unique, and that cannot be claimed for many writers. But as for the notion that *The Lord of the Rings* is just about the twentieth century's supreme achievement: dear oh dear oh dear. ■

Fruits of the Sea

By PETER GREEN

Memory and the Mediterranean by Fernand Braudel edited by Roselyne de Ayala and Paule Braudel translated by Siân Reynolds

(Alfred A. Knopf, 365 pp., $35)

I.

FERNAND BRAUDEL BELONGS in that select category of writers, from Karl Marx to Umberto Eco, who are more often talked about than read. How many of us can swear that we have digested all 1,375 pages of *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (1972), much less the 1,992 pages of that inspissated three-volume behemoth *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century* (1981)? Yet anyone with the slightest interest in the history of historiography (not to mention plenty whose cultural net is normally cast no wider than *The New York Review of Books*) feels competent to tell you, with great assurance, what made Braudel tick and the precise influence that he had on the way we look at the world, most often referring to the latter phenomenon, with airy Teutonic assurance, as our *Weltanschauung*.

Braudel, we learn, was obsessed with the *longue durée*, the measurement of historical time in generic eons rather than particularist years. His approach—propagated by the *Annales* school in France, with a daunting array of statistics, in its house organ of the same name—led to a regrettable disregard for dates, and more generally for the normal stuff of history. The trend was allegedly intensified by Braudel's weakness for geographical determinism, and his school's marked tendency to promote material culture over intellectual or religious development. Individuals were out, things were in. The result was a world in which students could tell you what Louis XVI ate for breakfast, where the material for his breeches was imported from, and what they cost, but not who he was, when he lived, what he believed in, or how (and why) he died.

How much, if any, residual truth does this picture contain, especially when set against such flat-out claims as Oswyn Murray's assertion, in his perceptive introduction to *Memory and the Mediterranean*, that Braudel was, quite simply, "the greatest historian of the twentieth century"? Of his largeness of vision, his prodigious learning, and his boundless energy there can be no doubt. But, as so often with such giants, his ideas have proved fatally easy to abuse if applied by rule of thumb. A good deal of the subsequent name-calling can be attributed to over-zealous imitators in schools or colleges, apparently determined to take the maestro's categories as absolute (a claim that Braudel never made) and to pursue them to absurdity. Just as Marx, toward the end of his life, argued with some justification that he was not a Marxist, so Braudel, always a spellbinding sorcerer on the podium, lived to see some of his apprentices re-shaping Braudelian notions in less than welcome ways. Worse, some of the young revolutionaries whose careers he made, and whose work he promoted, lost no time in easing him out of office the moment it was politic to do so. In a nice reversal of Pierre Vergniaud's well-known aphorism, this time it was not the revolution that, like Saturn, devoured its children; it was the children themselves who, having bitten the hand that fed them and found that it tasted good, ended by making a meal of their only begetter.

Murray goes on to assert that "so universal has his influence been on the study of history since the publication of his first major work fifty years ago that it is almost impossible for us to remember what history was like before Braudel." Insofar as this is true, it is a pity: one can only deplore the presentism implied by such facile amnesia, hardly better than that of politicians. But of course the claim is for the most part hyperbole, designed to make Braudel's achievement look a great deal more original than in fact it was. Many of his supposed innovations were not new at all—some, indeed, were of quite venerable antiquity—and in choosing and combining them he was almost as eclectic as Picasso.

Braudel's much-vaunted *longue durée* had been a staple of every geologist's and archaeologist's perspective for more than a century. Indeed, the scale of history implied takes us back to early debates between fossil-diggers and the theological epigoni of Archbishop James Ussher, who in 1658 assured a reverent world that Creation began during the night of October 23, 4004 B.C.E. Even the comparatively recent Holocene and Upper Pleistocene eras, reaching back as they did nearly

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150,000 years, were to render this estimate a shade parochial. Braudel's argument, not to be discounted, was that historians in effect continued to go about their business as though Ussher had been right.

HERE, IN SUM, was a natural teacher, who—not surprisingly, given his view of the field—figured that fellow professionals had prime claim on his revisionist attention. This belief did not make him popular. *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* the Roman satirist Juvenal asked: who will guard the guardians? Braudel took on the job with unquenchable gusto. Whether, as with the *longue durée*, he was simply reminding his colleagues of a long-established perspective that they had chosen to ignore, rather than blazing any sort of new trail, was unimportant to him. Inevitably, given the era in which he grew up, he also absorbed, and disseminated through *Annales*, a good deal that bears the stamp of Marxist historiography: the preference for analysis over narrative; the obsession with statistics; the comparative approach; the distrust of individualism (and in particular of the "Great Man" interpretation of history); the concentration on "the masses"; the search for continuity rather than change; the insistence on social and economic causation, on strictly material evidence. Yet, as Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell rightly insist in *The Corrupting Sea*, their recent (and strongly Braudel-influenced) study of Mediterranean history, the borrowing went only so far: what Braudel produced was "a history without class struggles and without inevitable revolutions—Marxism denatured, static history."

Those with the temerity to murmur, like Galileo, "but it *does* move" were dismissed as hopelessly old-fashioned—an attitude replete with irony, since Braudel himself, despite his immediate debt to such historians as Lucien Febvre, Alfred Philippson, and Henri Pirenne, was reaching back to a worldview that was first articulated by the Hippocratics and given wider cultural application by Herodotus. Early in the fifth century B.C.E., long even before Montesquieu, the anonymous author of a treatise titled *Airs, Waters, Places* outlined in vivid and sometimes scarifying detail what he took to be the impact of climate and terrain on the physical constitution and natural abilities of an area's inhabitants. Mountain-dwellers were tough and resilient. Those exposed to hot winds appeared physically flabby. You were likely to be more intelligent, and to have a better complexion, if you lived in a temperate zone, especially one with a clean water supply. Seasonal rains could affect childbirth. The lushness of Asia encouraged a life of pleasure and idleness, but it put manly courage, stamina, and industriousness at a discount. For these latter qualities, Europe, with its more violent climatic fluctuations, was the natural source. Asia was full of subservient weaklings ruled by despots. Europe produced fiercely independent warriors. We see here not only the template used by Herodotus to explain the Persian wars, but the source of several long-lasting racial prejudices, not to mention environmental determinism in its most brazen form.

BRAUDEL'S ECLECTICISM allowed him to pick and choose among the infinite varieties of geographical influence, and to carefully ignore the more malign and embarrassing among them. His attitude toward Herodotus reveals a similar selectivity. While wholeheartedly embracing that pioneering historian's breadth of approach—the ethnographic and sociological and economic interests, the eye for landscape that led Horden and Purcell to dub him the father not only of history but also of geomorphology—Braudel sedulously avoided Herodotus's fascination with individuals of every sort and both sexes, often as precipitants of historical change, as well as his constant nagging concern with divine intervention in human destiny.

At the same time, the seismic shift in historiography that Oswyn Murray rightly attributes to Braudel, and which stands as his prime achievement, remains wholly Herodotean in essence. What he did was radically to loosen, though by no means wholly to eliminate, the near-ubiquitous stranglehold that Thucydidean methodology had maintained on historical thinking for over two millennia: the restrictive concentration on war and politics, the uneasy blend of parochial particularism and universal theorizing, and above all the masculinization of historical perspective. In *Athens on Trial*, which appeared in 1994, Jenny Roberts reported, with evident surprise, that among classicists the only really hostile critics of Thucydides have been women. This is not surprising at all. It is exactly what was to be expected. What does come as a surprise is that Roberts does not mention Braudel. But then with honorable exceptions—most notably Michael Rostovtzeff, and now Oswyn Murray—Braudel has, ironically enough, had less overall effect on ancient historians (who are too often still in thrall to the Thucydidean message) than on most of their modern counterparts.

It is predictable, then, that the most substantial criticisms leveled at Braudel

TO THE PERSON WHO
CAN'T READ,
THIS ISN'T JUST
AN EMPTY SPACE.

IT'S A FEELING THAT
WON'T GO AWAY.

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and the *Annales* school should have had a distinctly Thucydidean flavor to them. In particular, Braudel's obsession with the *longue durée* was held, correctly, to have led to a general indifference (and sometimes an active hostility) to political history and the actions of individuals. This neglect was compounded by his not altogether successful attempts to apply structuralism to historiography. In 1965, at the conclusion of the second edition of *The Mediterranean*, he wrote: "I am by temperament a 'structuralist,' little tempted by the event, or even by the short-term conjuncture, which is after all merely a grouping of events in the same area"—thus in effect sidelining two out of his three declared scales of time-measurement.

Only the *longue durée* really drew him. Braudel referred to events as "crests of foam that the tides of history carry on their strong backs." He declared, magisterially, that "all efforts against the prevailing tide of history ... are doomed to failure." The cumulative judgment of his unfinished work *L'Identité de France* was: "Men do not make history, rather it is history above all that makes men and thereby absolves them from blame." This apothegm, with its odd echo of the canceled verses from Auden's poem "In Memory of W.B. Yeats" ("Time that with this strange excuse/pardoned Kipling and his views" and so on), has not received the attention that it deserves.

When we have sorted out the technical criticisms that can be made of Braudel's historiography—the uneasy tension between structuralism and individual motivation; the soft-pedaling of policy and action; the neglect of man's influence on the environment rather than vice versa; the arbitrary equation of geography with the *longue durée* and politics with the history of events (as Horden and Purcell pertinently ask, what about dynasties and earthquakes?); the absence of psychological considerations (*mentalités*); the privileging of the material over beliefs and art—what we are left with, paradoxically, is something far from the Olympian vision presupposed by the *longue durée*, something very personal and idiosyncratic. Gertrude Himmelfarb is not the only historian to have been struck by the apparent incongruity of the fact that in 1940, when Europe was being torn apart by the obsessive will of one arguably deranged individual, Braudel, then a prisoner of war, was already incubating his long-term approach to history, and making his contempt for "mere events" well known. Just as in the cases of Michael Rostovtzeff and Ronald Syme, the facts of this historian's life and career can help us to understand his historiography.

II.

Fernand Braudel was born in 1902, at the beginning of the twentieth century, and he grew up with it. A sickly child, he spent his earliest and most impressionistic years on his grandmother's smallholding at Luméville-en-Ornois, in the Meuse province of Lorraine. Its frontier position has always exposed Lorraine to invasion and occupation, which may be the reason that it has provided more than its share of French nationalist patriotism, from Joan of Arc to the double-barred cross that General Charles de Gaulle adopted as the emblem of the Free French in World War II. Braudel shared that patriotism: "I love France," he once declared, "with the same demanding and complicated passion as did Jules Michelet; without distinguishing between its good points and its bad, between what I like and what I find harder to accept." He once confessed that "during my travels, which tend to create illusions, I have dreamed of a Europe starting on the banks of the Somme, the Meuse, or the Rhine and stretching away to Siberia and distant Asia."

Like so many northerners, however, Braudel also fell joyfully in love with the Mediterranean. So here were his twin poles of passion: north and south. Pinning down the elusive nature—geographical, historical, economic, social—of these two great entities was to dictate his life's work. But it was always to the rural simplicity, hardships and all, of his Lorraine childhood that his heart and spirit looked back, as he confessed in a striking and heartfelt passage:

> A very old bell used to strike the hour in the little village in Lorraine where I grew up as a child: the village pond drove an old mill wheel; a stony path, as old as the world, plunged down like a torrent in front of my house; the house itself had been rebuilt in 1806, the year of Jena, and hemp used to be retted in the stream at the bottom of the meadows. I only have to think of these things and this book [*Civilization and Capitalism*] opens out for me afresh.... A bend in a path or a street can take anybody back to the past in this way.

Industrialization (all too intrusive in Lorraine itself) was inimical, and thereafter he tended to avoid it wherever possible. It was not to be his only avoidance.

Shortly before adolescence, the young Braudel returned to Paris, where his father was a teacher of mathematics. He entered the Lycée Voltaire (near the Père Lachaise cemetery), where among other things he learned Russian. He wanted to be a doctor, but his father was determined to see him a teacher. There were quarrels. At one point, challenging Braudel senior's social ambitions for his children, Fernand briefly went to work as a bank teller. Despite his excellent academic record, when it came to a university he did not compete for entry to the elite École Normale Supérieure, choosing instead to attend the Sorbonne. Looking back, he claimed, perhaps ironically, to have lacked ambition, and to have drifted into history simply because it was what he was best at.

He also wanted to break free of his family and to escape from the Paris bourgeoisie: to go provincial. Marginal interests were to become Braudel's forte. He plumped for economic and social history, for lecturers with poorly attended classes. But he was also in a hurry, and brains will out: he passed his *agrégation*, the competitive examination for prospective *lycée* teachers, after a single year. At twenty-one, in 1923, he was launched on the world as a professional instructor in history. As he was to say himself in old age, the vocation, the passion, only came later.

His first posting was not that of his choice. He wanted the *lycée* at Bar-le-Duc: the history of this Lorraine town during the first three years of the French Revolution had formed the topic of his graduating thesis. His horizons were still those of his childhood paradise. Instead, as his biographer Pierre Daix relates, his smart-ass answers during his interview got him shunted off to Constantine in Algeria: provincialization of a very different sort. He stayed there until 1932, and one of his Constantine students, Paule Pradel, shortly afterwards became his wife.

Intended as a put-down, Braudel's Algerian appointment proved seminal in his development. It introduced him—from an unusual angle—to the Mediterranean. Beyond Gibraltar and the Pillars of Hercules lay Spanish Tartessos, the Tarshish of the Bible. By 1927 he was reviewing works on Spanish history. He had already discovered Febvre's *La Terre et l'évolution humaine* (1922), translated as *A Geographical Introduction to History*: its influence was later to pervade Part I of *The Mediterranean*. As Murray rightly says, Algeria was where Braudel's "true intellectual formation began."

Yet ten years in a Muslim country—even though, on his own account, he "learnt to understand and respect Arabs and Berbers"—did not induce Braudel, in

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his magnum opus, to devote more than a few pages to the conflict between Christianity and Islam. And how could an intellectual Frenchman who grew up amid the aftershocks of *l'affaire Dreyfus* claim to have "only really discovered the Jewish question" in North Africa? We can sense here that natural distaste for the influence in history of strongly felt passions and beliefs, that distrust and perhaps latent fear of ideological and religious motivation in its more extreme form, which coming events were to exacerbate, and which led to a number of striking omissions in his published work.

In 1932, Braudel's growing reputation got him recalled to Paris, and gained him successive appointments in two fairly distinguished city *lycées*. He also brought with him from Algeria a photographic machine that he had bought from an American cameraman and adapted to copy documents. Ever since his student days he had been obsessed with local archives, and now, with eminent practicality, he had found a way to cut time in their examination: it is Braudel whom all scholars have to thank for the invention of microfilm. As he relates, he shot kilometers of filmed material during research trips, to be studied at leisure back home. This device proved invaluable when, in 1935, along with the young Claude Lévi-Strauss, he accepted an offer of a five-year secondment to the newly founded Universidade de São Paulo in Brazil. Every winter he returned to Europe, where he copied up to three thousand documents daily in the great Mediterranean trading centers such as Venice (Ragusa, the modern Dubrovnik, frustrated him with a ban on photography), to be examined back in Brazil.

In São Paulo the young professor and his wife lived very comfortably, renting a large mansion complete with car and Italian chauffeur. "It was in Brazil," he later observed, "that I became intelligent." Perhaps "academically smart" would be a better description. On the voyage home in 1937, he finally met, and formed a close friendship with, his mentor Lucien Febvre. (It was Febvre who, together with Marc Bloch, had founded *Annales* in 1929, with its emphasis on social and economic forces rather than the traditional Thucydidean cocktail of war, politics, and government.) In Brazil he had read *Gone With the Wind* on its publication in 1936, and "met black people in an atmosphere that reminded me" of that novel. His style of life did not stop Braudel from casting a sardonic radical eye upon the Brazilian ruling class, to him "a social anachronism," with unreal and outdated beliefs "in the virtues of culture, civilization, and reason." That judgment must have come back to haunt him, with ironic poignancy, four years later.

In 1938, Braudel took another step up the scholarly ladder (at a considerably lower salary, a sure mark of its prestige, and cutting short his five-year stint at São Paulo) with his appointment to the historical and philological division of the famous postgraduate École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris. His massive study of the Mediterranean was well advanced. Archival material in the Foreign Ministry, the Bibliothèque Nationale, and other collections beckoned enticingly. But then Hitler—a figure with a good deal less respect than Braudel for the old-fashioned virtues of culture, civilization, and reason—proceeded like some *diabolus ex machina* to torpedo the historian's well-laid plans. Upon the outbreak of war Braudel was called up, became a lieutenant of artillery, and was posted to the Rhine frontier in Alsace. Captured—and in disregard of the subsequent armistice (it was Göring who claimed to regard treaties as "so much toilet paper")—Braudel spent the next four years as a prisoner of war, first in Mainz, where he had access to the municipal library, and from 1942, as a suspected Gaulliste (his Lorraine patriotism would out), in a "discipline camp" for "enemies of Germany" at Lübeck, where he was thrown back entirely on his own resources.

These experiences were formidable, since in addition to his wide and omnivorous reading Braudel was also blessed with a prodigious memory. He gave historical lectures to his fellow prisoners, some of which, recovered from notebooks, have been recently published in *Les Ambitions de l'Histoire*. Almost all his major postwar themes are there in embryo. In fact—and this is perhaps the most famous single fact about Braudel's career—the entire first draft of what was to become his great work on the Mediterranean was composed in captivity, and written (as Murray reminds us) "in exercise books on a small plank in a room shared with twenty prisoners." Surprisingly, his jailers allowed him to mail installments to Febvre in Paris for criticism.

By the time of his release, the draft was complete. Then, with renewed access to university libraries, he rewrote the entire text at dizzying speed, achieving between thirty and fifty pages a day, and finally, in 1947, presented the result, all 1,160 pages of it, as his Sorbonne dissertation—no longer, as originally planned in the prewar years, on Philip II and the Mediterranean, but now, as Febvre had urged him from the beginning, on the Mediterranean and Philip II: a very different and far larger concept. That this was a stupendous intellectual and moral achievement in the face of overwhelming odds no one could conceivably deny. That it was in some way crucial to Braudel's evolution as a historian is also evident, but just how crucial remains less clear. There are, though, some suggestive hints. At a mundane level, those four years of captivity served as a paradoxical kind of sabbatical. Freed from a professor's endless administrative responsibilities, Braudel could concentrate on his great project, and formulate its central ideas in a series of camp lectures, with feedback from Febvre in Paris.

The real question is just how 1940 and the aftermath of defeat and occupation impinged on Braudel's thinking. His wartime writing, he said later, was a "direct existential response to the tragic times I was passing through." Even in retrospect the tone is understandably frantic. Braudel speaks of "yawning disasters, gaping chasms, plunging tunnels of gloomy light"; these catastrophes resemble "great rents in the canvas of history." He and his fellow captives "represented the lost France, dust blown by the wind from a heap of sand." The real France, *la France profonde*, would survive.

He described *The Mediterranean* at this point as "a work of contemplation," and Murray is not the only historian to have interpreted this work, rightly, as "his escape into a world that he could control and whose detailed realities he could believe in with greater ease than the artificial world of prison life." But this was not all he was escaping from. In an important reminiscence in 1990, he wrote of having to "get beyond, reject, deny" *événements*, events. By this, as he made clear, he meant not only the Nazi-controlled French media, but everything—including what came in, by clandestine receivers, from London. "The hell with events," he declared, "above all unwelcome ones! I had to believe that history and destiny were written at a far more profound level." What could better serve this purpose than the *longue durée*, which gave the historian, as Braudel himself admitted, an Olympian view, hovering far above the quotidian mess of history like Hardy's President of the Immortals in *The Dynasts*?

Nor can there be much doubt about the kind of unpleasant or embarrassing material that the mess contained. Braudel, I suspect, had grown up as an academic innocent. Like so many European

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intellectuals, he had experienced an acute crisis upon discovering what concepts such as environmental determinism could yield in practice when ruthlessly applied by the self-styled Aryan *Übermensch*; and the young unworldly scholar who had come so late to the Jewish question now saw the naked face of anti-Semitism in action. What lies behind those final words of *L'Identité de la France*, asserting that the forces of history made men rather than vice versa, and in so doing "absolved them from blame," is surely a feeling of inadvertent guilt. His business had been with ideas, and he had learned, the hard way, that ideas can kill.

It was to Braudel's credit that he came through this crisis so much more honorably than many of his contemporaries. If he had not died for his beliefs, like Marc Bloch, he had been imprisoned for them; and there is no hint whatsoever in his early career of the trucking with totalitarianism that crops up in the records of so many of his more pliable contemporaries. But the havoc wreaked by the Nazis on intellectual assumptions generally, when combined with the brutal impact of invasion and, subsequently, genocide, did have a profound influence on Braudel's historiography, giving him an ingrained suspicion of, and repugnance for, both immediate events and the ideological notions associated with them, what came to be known as *histoire événementielle*. The Upper Paleolithic was safer than Thucydides's Corcyra. Hence the distaste (except at a safe distance in time, and only then with uneasy qualms) for politics and diplomacy, for the history of ideas, for religious conflict. At the same time Braudel could not accept the notion that (canceled Auden again) "History may say Alas / but cannot help or pardon." The impersonal forces of economic and social history, by removing responsibility from the individual, could be seen as doing just that: as helping and pardoning. The *longue durée* conferred a sort of absolution.

III.

IT MIGHT HAVE been thought that in 1945 such a concept of history would prove irresistible, but nothing could be further from the truth. Though Braudel and the *Annalistes* always had had their supporters, the older Sorbonne historians, traditionalists and academically clubbish, were suspicious of them from the beginning. The *sorbonnistes*, as their opponents referred to them, had already slowed down Lucien Febvre's career before the war. Neither one of the two Sorbonne professors on the *Annales* editorial committee was an orthodox historian. When Braudel returned to his job at the École Pratiques des Hautes Études, he was already tarred by association with the *Annales* group. His change of dissertation topic was seen—rightly—as symptomatic of his allegiance to the *longue durée*. Worse, he was outspoken in his opinions, and he made no effort to pander to his superiors. Worse still from the point of view of the traditionalists, hidebound pedagogically no less than in their historiography, he proved a brilliant and charismatic teacher. Students flocked to his lectures.

When, in 1947, a Sorbonne chair in modern history fell vacant, Braudel was urged by his supporters, including the distinguished classicist André Aymard, to apply for it. In retrospect, it is clear that he was the ideal candidate. But he was to find that his academic colleagues proved a greater barrier to his cherished scholarly ambitions than his Nazi captors had. Pierre Renouvin, the Sorbonne's all-powerful director of historic studies, played him along while privately running a rival candidate named Gaston Zeller. In addition to his safely conservative methods, Zeller (as Daix reveals) had also been a "devoted collaborator" on Renouvin's own large-scale *Histoire des Relations Internationales*. Zeller was appointed, and he turned the knife in the wound by promptly announcing a lecture course on—the Mediterranean. Braudel's exclusion from the Sorbonne professoriat remained the great disappointment of his life. And from then on, as Murray says, "the Sorbonne stagnated as a conservative backwater." Braudel's ouster proved intellectually and institutionally expensive.

Two years later his thesis was published as the first edition of *The Mediterranean* and made his name. With money from the Rockefeller Foundation (which provoked the Communists to denounce Braudel as a tool of American imperialism) a new division of the École Pratique des Hautes Études in social sciences was established, with Febvre and Braudel in charge. The *sorbonnistes* had been neatly outflanked. That same year Braudel was elected to the Collège de France, and Gaston Berger, the director general of secondary education, in a break with tradition, put him in charge of the history section of the national program of teacher certification (*agrégation*), an immensely powerful post: it took the Sorbonne until 1954 to get him removed from it.

IN 1956 FEBVRE died, and Braudel took over the direction of both the social sciences division and the *Annales*. He now set about an inspired series of hirings, which included Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, and Pierre Vidal-Naquet. Braudel still hoped, as he related, to establish "an experimental faculty of economic and social sciences" at the Sorbonne. The university blocked his every move. In the end it was not until 1970 (again at Gaston Berger's instigation) that a new and independent Maison des Sciences de l'Homme was established, with Braudel as director. By then he was only two years short of retirement.

Academically, Braudel's career was a bitter fight to the end, and not only against conservatism. As early as 1964, the revisionist textbook of general history that he had written for secondary schools (*Grammaire des Civilisations*, translated in 1994 as *A History of Civilizations*) was being taken out of circulation by many teachers on the excuse that it was "too hard for the students"; but Braudel's supporters have always argued that the reason was that the textbook included an unwelcome amount of material from the social sciences and on the Third World. In 1965, amid the throes of decolonization, the section on the "African world" was excised. Georges Pompidou blamed the student riots of 1968 on Braudel and the *Annales* movement; and in 1970, partly as the result of this, his textbook was withdrawn altogether, and the old system of narrative history was restored in the *lycées*. Events, the conservatives argued, had displaced the *longue durée*. Either the "new history" had caused the riots, or it had been disproved by them. Perhaps both. The old Sorbonne was swept away, but the *sorbonnistes*, as Murray says, "had their revenge on the man who was most responsible for establishing their irrelevance to modern life."

At the same time Braudel's own relevance was being called in question. His *Annales* epigoni were moving on, and not always in directions that agreed with the views of their *cher maître*. Braudel won a battle with Lévi-Strauss over the latter's anti-historical and monadic approach to structuralism, and advanced beyond his own earlier over-reliance on statistics; but the new history in the 1960s, with its emphasis on fallible perceptions rather than events, its use of literary and artistic sources as well as archives, and its reversion to German-style cultural history, was profoundly alien to him. Even more alien was the notion of historical relativity and disjunction pioneered in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* by Foucault, who went out of his way to attack the *longue durée*. Braudel lost the editorship of *Annales* to younger successors with very different ideas, who now were to become, as he

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had never been, the Establishment. He remained an outsider to the end, and Gaston Berger's Maison des Sciences de l'Homme was the expensive monument to his banishment. In the long run it is his extraordinary record of publication, and its durable impact, by which he must be judged.

IV.

THE FIRST AND the most daunting impression left with any student embarking on Fernand Braudel's written work is one of sheer massiveness. It is not so much the number of books that he wrote, which was average (with a surprising number published after his death), as the size, the range, and the truly stupendous erudition of the best-known among them: *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* and *Civilization and Capitalism 15th-18th Century*. Perhaps the best comparison is with the work of the Russian émigré scholar Michael Rostovtzeff, from whose two great social and economic histories, of the Roman Empire (1926) and of the Hellenistic world (1941), Braudel learned much.

Rostovtzeff, too, had analyzed the unification of the Mediterranean by trade, in a network the hubs of which were at such *entrepôts* as Rhodes and Delos, and which had peaked under Rome. He also linked this network to the medieval activities of the Hanseatic League, something that Braudel missed in *The Mediterranean* but duly picked up and developed in the third volume of *Civilization and Capitalism*. Yet the really stellar virtue demonstrated by both Rostovtzeff and Braudel, to a quite extraordinary degree, is the ability—often denigrated by those who have never tried it—to deploy a vast mass of detailed evidence and yet never lose sight of a broad general theme and narrative: to give each tree its proper due while always bearing in mind the shape and the structure of the forest. This is the rarest and most difficult of historiographical skills, demanding immense reserves of learning, judgment, imagination, and architectonic vision. Braudel possessed it in full measure, and for this alone he would deserve posterity's gratitude.

But it also raises a further interesting point. Critics have sometimes implied, when going on about the *longue durée*, that as a consequence of his Olympian stance Braudel either despised details, in the manner of Voltaire (who once exclaimed, "*Malheur aux détails! C'est une vermine qui tue les grands ouvrages!*"—"The hell with details, verminous creatures that kill great works!"), or simply lacked the patience and the delicacy to deal with them. Nothing could be further from the truth. Braudel, as all his major works demonstrate, had the kind of clear head for mountainous and conflicting evidence that one tends to associate more with a first-class trial judge; but he could also turn out the very kind of Thucydidean narrative that he was normally at pains to eschew. The third part of *The Mediterranean*, in particular the chapters on the origins of the Holy League and the events leading up to the Battle of Lepanto, offers traditional historiography, *histoire événementielle*, in a style that would have been familiar to Leopold von Ranke, and does it very well. In an uncomfortable prefatory note he was still emphasizing that "events are the ephemera of history: they pass across its stage like fireflies." But he had proved himself capable of dealing with them—or at least with some of them, carefully chosen—when he needed to do so.

AT THE OUTSET of his career, moreover, Braudel had associated such a reverence for the particulars with the business of educating the young. As early as 1936, addressing the São Paulo Institute of Education on "The Teaching of History," he gave his listeners a piece of advice that may come as a surprise to opponents of his historiography, and should be taken to heart by all in the profession: "Take care that your teaching is not guided by your preferences as a research worker. I insist on that." It is a wonderful lecture, and it goes a long way to explain Braudel's attraction as a teacher. Aim for simplicity, he said: not the kind that distorts the truth and is just another name for mediocrity, but the intellectual perception that brings clarity. And do not leave out the groundwork:

> It would be a dereliction of duty to talk to students only about firms, cheques, and the price of wheat. Historiography has slowly gone through various phases. It has been the chronicle of princes, the history of battles, or the mirror of political events; today, thanks to the efforts of bold pioneers, it is diving into the economic and social realities of the past. These stages are like the treads of a stairway leading to the truth. Do not omit any of them in the presence of students.

We might expect these admirable principles to be well to the fore in Braudel's *lycée* textbook, *A History of Civilizations*. But between the young São Paulo lecturer and the postwar educationalist had fallen the shadow of racism and the Holocaust, with intellectually crippling effect. None of his works better demonstrates this than *A History of Civilizations*. In a book that aimed to bring world civilizations up to the minute, we find only one casual reference to Hitler, and nothing about Nazism, fascism, or anti-Semitism (in itself no bad reason for withdrawing a textbook, I would have thought). Neither World War I nor World War II is mentioned more than glancingly. Soviet

Neighbor on the Top Balcony

The hill, chérie, makes you feel
you should sit long as it takes

while the shape of cloud against trees moves on,
the rip-rap and water making sounds

somewhere between a grammar and Cuban *son*.
Like soon the intricacy will let up a second

and light gather to a line of stickbrush,
some presentiment of whatever got you this far.

Past the next house and breakers
you can make out the surface tension

of a run-off pond, mirror of thirst
reflecting the sky. Looking at it tells you

sometimes you can't look too hard,
can spend half the day wanting

another minute to bring back the last one,
the exact moment that would confirm

how twilight by degrees gets weirder,
its shadows and currents about to elide in the cove,

the shipping lanes, then the fog further out
that always works so quickly on you,

lifting again to reveal its name.

Garrett Doherty

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Marxism gets considerable coverage, but primarily as an economic tool, "a rationalization of human affairs." Events such as the Bukharin trials and the gulags do not get star billing either. The religious basis of Islam is acknowledged, but its future, too, is seen in Marxism. (The kind of religious-cum-political passion that drove Mohammed Atta to hurl a jet airliner at the World Trade Center as a missile of God is beyond Braudel's historiographical comprehension.) The Communists were characteristically stupid in attacking him, even though he dismissed them: his own brand of cleaned-up materialism on a wide geographical front would have served them well when their ideology was imploding in the 1990s.

Braudel's inability to cope with the dark side of totalitarianism was by no means unique. In 1948 W. W. Tarn, whose inter-war attempts to identify Alexander of Macedon with a perennial Brotherhood of Man had won him wide popularity (go figure), confessed in the second edition of his *Alexander the Great* that he did not know how to rewrite his thoughts on the indestructibility of that concord, what the Greeks called *homónoia*. "Since then we have seen new and monstrous births," he ruefully wrote, "and are still moving in a world not realized." I suspect that this, in essence, was the reaction of many humanists such as Braudel, heirs to the nineteenth-century tradition of reason, light, and economic salvation, for whom the evil at the heart of man was, at best, an intellectual paradox of the kind aired by George Bernard Shaw in his prefaces.

IT FOLLOWS THAT Braudel was more comfortable the further away from the "new and monstrous births" he got: the longer the *durée*, the better. And so the existence of an unpublished manuscript by him on the early history of the Mediterranean, from the Lower Paleolithic period down to the later years of the Roman Empire—and one designed for the general reader at that—ought to have had publishers salivating from the word go. Passionate, magisterial, and provocative, *Memory and the Mediterranean* forms a natural overture to his most famous magnum opus—in Hollywood terms, the perfect prequel. Yet it took almost thirty years for the original French edition, *Les Mémoires de la Méditerranée*, to see the light of day. It appeared in 1998, by which time some of its judgments were, inevitably, blinking a bit at the exposure.

As its French editors say, this book has a history. In 1968 Albert Skira, the Swiss doyen of high-level coffee-table books, was planning a multi-volume large-format illustrated history of the Mediterranean, clearly designed to cash in on Braudel's fame. With shrewd insight, he invited Braudel to contribute not only (as was to be expected) the volumes on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but also the ones covering prehistory and classical antiquity. Braudel accepted with enthusiastic alacrity, and delivered his text the following year. After which, interestingly, nothing happened until 1971–1972, when "the project was held up, and there were uncertainties over the choice of illustrations." One year later Skira died, and the entire series was canceled, though hardly, as the editors oddly claim, "almost before it had begun." Braudel, they tell us, was too busy with other major projects to revise his text (it was returned five years later!) for separate publication, or to find suitable maps and illustrations. "So," they conclude, "he set the manuscript aside and thereafter more or less forgot about it."

There is something very fishy about all this. Why was what would clearly have been a highly popular international series first held up and then dropped? When was Braudel, a frenetically hard worker, ever too busy to deal with his own material, especially something for which he had shown such enthusiasm? The idea of maps and illustrations as a serious stumbling block is laughable. But look again at the timing. Braudel's text was delivered in the immediate aftermath of the Paris student riots in 1968. Braudel himself, as we have seen, became the target of fierce obloquy from both ends of the political spectrum. He was also in the process of being rendered redundant by his protégés. It does not strike me as beyond the bounds of possibility that, whatever other problems they may have had, the executives at Skira simply got cold feet about the whole project.

IN ANY CASE, it is unconscionable that we should have had to wait so long for such a splendid book, which plays to all its author's best qualities: the encyclopedic yet never oppressive knowledge; the bold panoramic grasp of vast periods; the refusal to jettison overall proportionalism when dealing with Greece and Rome. (Despite his disingenuous disclaimers, Braudel had always made a close study of the ancient world: one of his favorite professors was the great Greek historian Maurice Holleaux.) We are never allowed to forget that, if we imagine the evolution of life on earth in terms of a solar year, *Homo sapiens* occupies only a few moments before midnight on December 31, a properly humbling reflection.

Braudel's style is vivid, often emotional: inside the economic statistician, I suspect, a romantic idealist is wildly signaling to be let out, as his famous paean to the Mediterranean suggests:

> Its character is complex, awkward, and unique. It cannot be contained within our measurements and classifications. No simple biography beginning with date of birth can be written of this sea; no simple narrative of how things happened would be appropriate to its history. The Mediterranean is not even a *single* sea, it is a complex of seas; and these seas are broken up by islands, interrupted by peninsulas, ringed by intricate coastlines. Its life is linked to the land, its poetry more than half-rural, its sailors may turn peasant with the seasons; it is the sea of vineyards and olive-trees just as much as the sea of the long-oared galleys and the roundships of merchants, and its history can no more be separated from that of the lands surrounding it than the clay can be separated from the hands of the potter who shapes it.

The earth for Braudel, as for the Stoics, is a living entity, on which the Mediterranean can be seen as "an ancient scar." From these unimaginably remote beginnings he conducts his readers, with a sure hand, on what he calls "the long march to civilization." We get the development of agrarian civilizations, but always behind them the slow and unifying evolution of maritime trade. (Half of the excellent color plates in this book display ancient representations of ships.) Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Crete are all seen, revealingly, as players on a greater stage than their own territories. Colonization, predictably, is stressed. Rome's main achievement Braudel takes to have been the creation of a "Mediterranean civilization."

ESPECIALLY IN THE later sections of this book, we are reminded of the refreshing heterodoxies that got this incorrigible outsider into so much trouble with traditionalists. (In his last public lecture, in October, 1985, shortly before his death, he remarked: "People I like advise me not to be 'unreasonable, as usual.' Do you think I've taken their advice?") Braudel could not care less about the Mycenaeans, except insofar as they preserved Cretan culture. He expresses "great regret" that Greece's destiny was linked to the East rather than the West. Of the city-state Greeks, he has this to say: "The passionate love they bore their little homelands verged on the pathological.... They used a term meaning sexual desire, *himeros*, to refer to it."

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Not surprisingly, Braudel equates the Greek "golden age" with the scientific efflorescence that culminated in Herodotus, the "extraordinary father of history who was also the founding father of geography and anthropology." Even less surprisingly, he prefers "to set aside Thucydides, the scientific historian of the short term [*temps court*]." About Caesar's dismemberment of Gaul he shows himself as fiercely patriotic as Vercingetorix (or Asterix). On the other hand, he has learned not to let his geography become too affected by determinism, and some of his verdicts that might have raised eyebrows thirty years ago—for example, that both Athens's Sicilian venture of 415 B.C.E. and Alexander's whole career of eastern conquest were "insane"—have by now more or less become conventional wisdom, though the notion that Alexander's "great mistake" lay in not going west rather than east merely echoes one of Braudel's favorite obsessions.

IT IS VERY much to his credit that the editorial team assigned the task of updating his text (sensibly, with unobtrusive endnotes, to avoid spoiling the style and the narrative flow) found so little needing change, and most of that in the early, primarily archaeological, chapters. (Ironists will enjoy the fact that quite a few of the changes involve making Braudel's *durée* even longer, often by a hundred thousand or so years.) One thing missed is the increasing apprehension of possible fakes and forgery affecting historical interpretation (say, in the matter of the Minoan snake-goddesses). But by and large they have done their work well.

Oswyn Murray is right, too, in his sense of how much Braudel would have enjoyed the new finds of Paleolithic art, the new vistas being opened up by archaeological genetics and evolutionary biology—to which one might add the impact of asteroids as a possible explanation for the mysterious collapse of civilizations circa 2200 and 1200 B.C.E. Even Braudel's distaste for the history of ideas has a payoff here. Who else could not only have spent more time—without any literary evidence whatsoever—on the Phoenicians, the Etruscans, and the Carthaginians than on the Greeks, and not only have waxed lyrical over their mercantile brilliance and industrial skills, but also have almost persuaded us of their equal achievements? Even though, right at the end, he concedes Carthage's bloody-minded religious conservatism, Braudel still laments that grim city's destruction by Rome. This, certainly, is one book by Braudel that has the capacity to provoke and stimulate everyone, from the young student to the seasoned general reader.

One last word on a subject often shamefully ignored. Braudel has been extraordinarily fortunate in his English-language translators: Miriam Kochan, Sarah Matthews, Richard Mayne, and above all Siân Reynolds. They have been not only excellent French linguists and admirable stylists in their own right, but also, quite evidently, at the very least familiar with what they were translating and alert to historical conventions. Reynolds, who is responsible for both *The Mediterranean* and *Civilization and Capitalism*, a quite monumental achievement in itself, takes her farewell of Braudel in the present volume, the last of his full-length books to be translated. As usual, her version is a most elegant achievement. It catches Braudel's sparkling and passionate prose with remarkable skill. The slips are minimal ("Aetesian" for "Etesian," and the like), and there are a few places where I would question her readings (one is the book's title: for me, *Les Mémoires de la Méditerranée* means "Recollections of the Mediterranean," which well describes Braudel's approach to this work). But these are minor cavils. Overall, this seems an appropriate occasion to salute the life work of one of the very best French translators of the last half-century. She has served a great historian faithfully and well. ■

Jodi Magnan / Ft. Peck Comm. College / Major: Business Admin.
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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Mortal Sin

LAST SUNDAY *THE NEW YORK Times* ran a story about recently published documents from the Nuremberg archives detailing the Nazis' attempts to neutralize and destroy Christianity within Germany. Nazi leaders viewed Hitler's cynical Concordat with the Catholic Church as temporary, the summary argued, because Catholic doctrine "could not be reconciled with the principle of racism."

THIS NEWS MUST HAVE STARTLED readers of Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's cover story in last week's issue ("What Would Jesus Have Done?" January 21). Since I admired Goldhagen's book *Hitler's Willing Executioners* and glowingly reviewed *Constantine's Sword,* James Carroll's book on Catholic anti-Semitism, and since, like any Catholic with a conscience, I have tried for some time to grapple with my Church's shameful past with respect to the Jewish people, I was looking forward to Goldhagen's essay. What I found can only be called shocking. Indeed, the essay's intellectual dishonesty, its elisions and conflations, its animus against Catholicism itself, would shock anyone eager to get to the bottom of this dark and difficult subject.

I SHOULD SAY FIRST THAT I CONSIDER my Church responsible for fostering, promoting, and legitimizing bigotry against Jews from its very inception. The attempt to exculpate the Church from this legacy and its moral responsibility is contemptible. There is simply no doubt that, from the very first religious battles in the fledgling Christian Church, Jesus-following Jews helped to demonize many other Jewish sects. There is also no doubt, as Carroll starkly shows, that these early schisms were subsequently used to fuel a pathological prejudice that was responsible for murder, persecution, and inhumanity over two millennia. The details of Pius XII's inaction in the face of monstrous evil seem to me irrelevant, and most defenses of him weak. We know he did not rise to the moral challenge unfolding in front of him. In much of this, I don't only agree with Goldhagen's argument, I fervently endorse it. The proposal to canonize Pius XII strikes me as obscene.

MUCH OF THIS IS FAMILIAR, AND Goldhagen adds little to the factual record. In fact, the only original thing in Goldhagen's essay is his use of other people's scholarship to advance a new claim: that there was no relevant moral difference between Nazism and Catholicism in the 1930s and 1940s. Yes, there are phrases designed to insulate him from such criticisms, but I see no other way to interpret his piece as a whole. For Goldhagen, the cross and the swastika are interchangeable. This strikes me as not only offensive, but deeply dangerous. By regarding the Catholicism of the time as morally indistinguishable from Nazism, Goldhagen disturbingly undermines the uniqueness of the evil Hitler represented.

AM I EXAGGERATING? TAKE THE following statements. Goldhagen argues that the institutional culture of the Church was "centrally animated by the notion that all Jews were Christ-killers." He cites the Church's "contribution to the German-led persecution and extermination of the Jews." He says Catholicism's legacy has an "obvious integral relationship to the genesis of the Holocaust." He says that the Church was "greatly sympathetic to the Germans' eliminationist impulses"—i.e., greatly sympathetic to mass murder. He argues at one point that there is no "difference in kind between the Church's 'anti-Judaism' and its off-shoot European 'anti-Semitism,'" and at another that the overlap between Nazi and Catholic anti-Semitism was a "figurative 90 percent" that "made little difference." I think that means there is no effective difference. What else can that mean?

HE SAYS THAT A SUPPRESSED 1939 Encyclical that condemned Nazi anti-Semitism and doctrines of racial purity was actually an expression of "soft Nazism." He argues that a Catholic newspaper that disavowed the murder of Jews as un-Christian and "urged its readers to show Christian charity to the Jews" was insincere. He states that the Church "materially aided [Hitler] in mass murder." Notice the adverbs and adjectives: "*centrally* animated," "*integral* relationship," "*materially* aided." These are not weak claims. Then there's this sentence: "The Church was not an opponent of the death penalty, which it officially endorsed. The logic of its enmity toward Jews suggested lethal measures against Jews, even if other (barely known) religious doctrines formally inhibited the Church from accepting this logic as a guide to action." Does Goldhagen honestly believe that a limited argument for the death penalty for specific crimes is equivalent to endorsing genocide? And does he honestly believe that the moral injunction against murder, enshrined in the Ten Commandments and endorsed by the Church for two millennia, was a "barely known" doctrine?

AS MOST SCHOLARS ACKNOWLEDGE, the Church's shameful trafficking in anti-Semitism was based on an ancient theological rejection of the tenets of Judaism. The Nazis' anti-Semitism, in contrast, was based on a modern racial notion of Aryan superiority. Did the one feed the other in the popular discourse? Of course. Are they morally indistinguishable? Of course not. To believe that Jews should be converted is not the same as believing they should be exterminated. Hitler understood this, which is why he tried to exploit the Church's anti-Judaism but ultimately aimed to destroy the Church itself. The Church articulated this distinction in its own Encyclical, read from every German pulpit. It argued that race, like "time, space, [and] country," could never be a basis for morality. Did some Catholics traffic in racial anti-Semitism? Yes, they did, and it even infected some official publications. But was this ever Catholic doctrine? No. Goldhagen concedes this point at the beginning of his screed and then, by rhetorical sleights of hand, insists upon the reverse by the end.

PERHAPS THIS SMEAR SPRINGS FROM righteous anger—and, heaven knows, such anger is justified. The Church's cowardly acquiescence in evil warrants anger on a great and enduring scale. But why then does Goldhagen go one step further to argue that there is no moral difference between sins of omission and commission, that, in his words, "not to choose is to choose"? It is here that one notices the ugly tropes in the piece. Although many German Protestants were more viciously anti-Semitic than Catholics and, in contrast, actually fused their organizations with Nazism, Goldhagen all but ignores them. Nor will any Catholic be unaware of the ancient slur that the papacy is an instrument of the anti-Christ. It is a staple of street bigots, yet Goldhagen deploys it more than once. In fact, he argues that the Church was actually "serving" a human anti-Christ (i.e., Hitler) and that "any evaluation of the Catholic Church as a moral institution must *centrally*" take that into account. The anti-Christ, huh? The last time I heard that was when I was being jeered in my Protestant high school in England. The sources change. The smears remain the same. But now they call them scholarship.

ANDREW SULLIVAN

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Through the Cleveland Scholarship Program, Johnnie Mae Boone chose a school for her children, Alicia and Demetrius.

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The Positive Research Story

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Cleveland Scholarship Beneficiaries

"The program effectively serves the population of families and children for which it was intended and developed. The program was designed to serve low-income students..." (Indiana University, 1999)

"The average family income...was $16,000...Scholarship recipients were more likely to live in single-parent families and less likely to have a child in a program for gifted or talented students...[R]ecipients were more likely than public school [students] to be African American..." (Harvard University, 1999)

Achievement of Cleveland Scholarship Beneficiaries

Scholarship "students in existing private schools had significantly higher test scores than public school students in language (45.0 versus 40.0) and science (40.0 versus 36.0)." (Indiana University, 1999)

Students "enrolled in the Scholarship Program for the full three years continue to perform slightly, but statistically significantly, higher" than public school students. (Indiana University, 2001)

Parent Satisfaction in Cleveland

Parents of scholarship students "tend to be much more satisfied with their child's school than other parents...[S]cholarship recipient parents are more satisfied with the child's teachers, more satisfied with the academic standards at the child's school, more satisfied with order and discipline, [and] more satisfied with social activities at the school..." Parents of scholarship students "remained considerably more satisfied with their school than parents of students in public schools." (Harvard University, 1999)

Copies of the Cleveland research is available from the Indiana Center for Evaluation (www.indiana.edu/~iuice/) and Harvard University's Program on Education Policy and Government (www.ksg.harvard.edu/pepg/).

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